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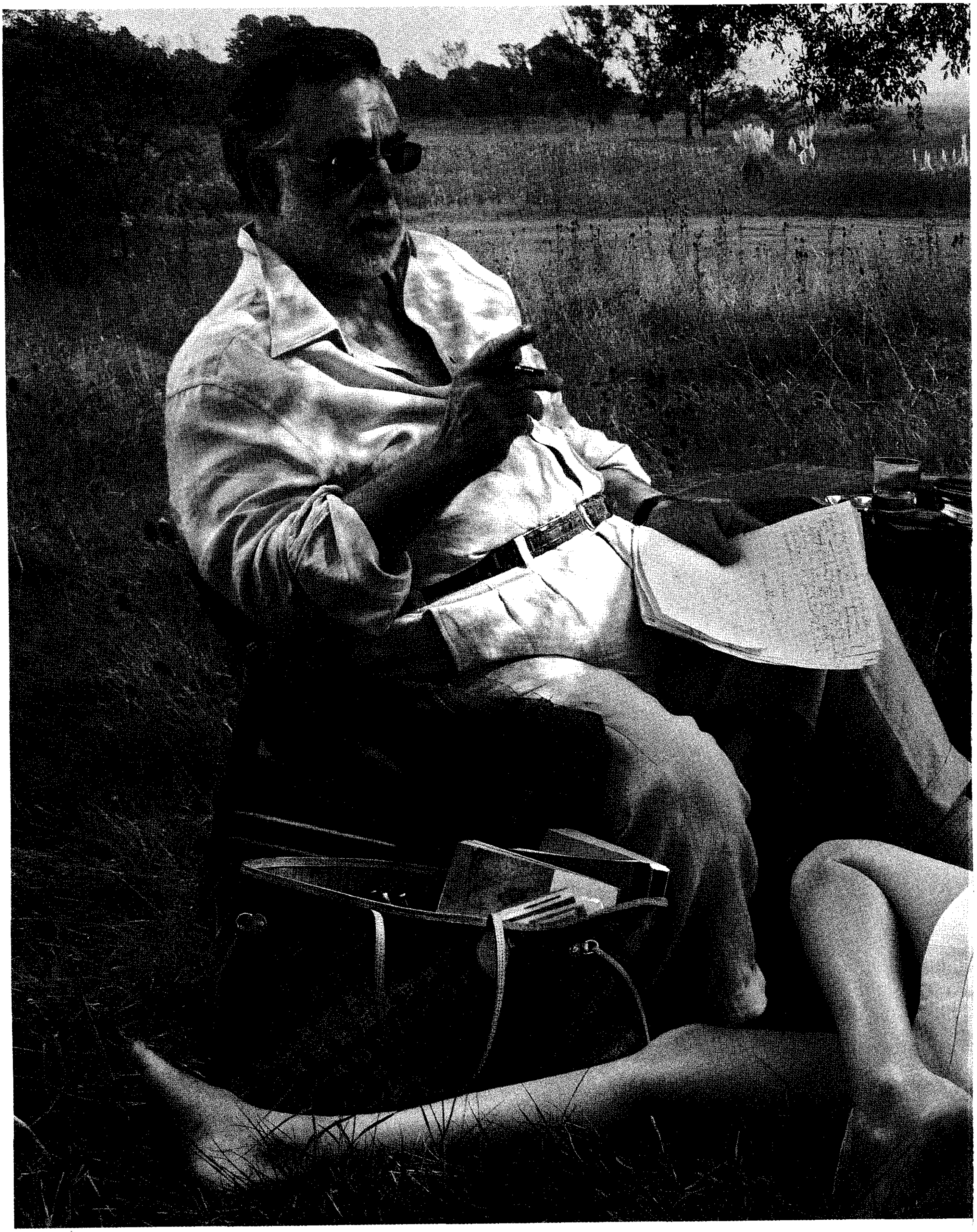

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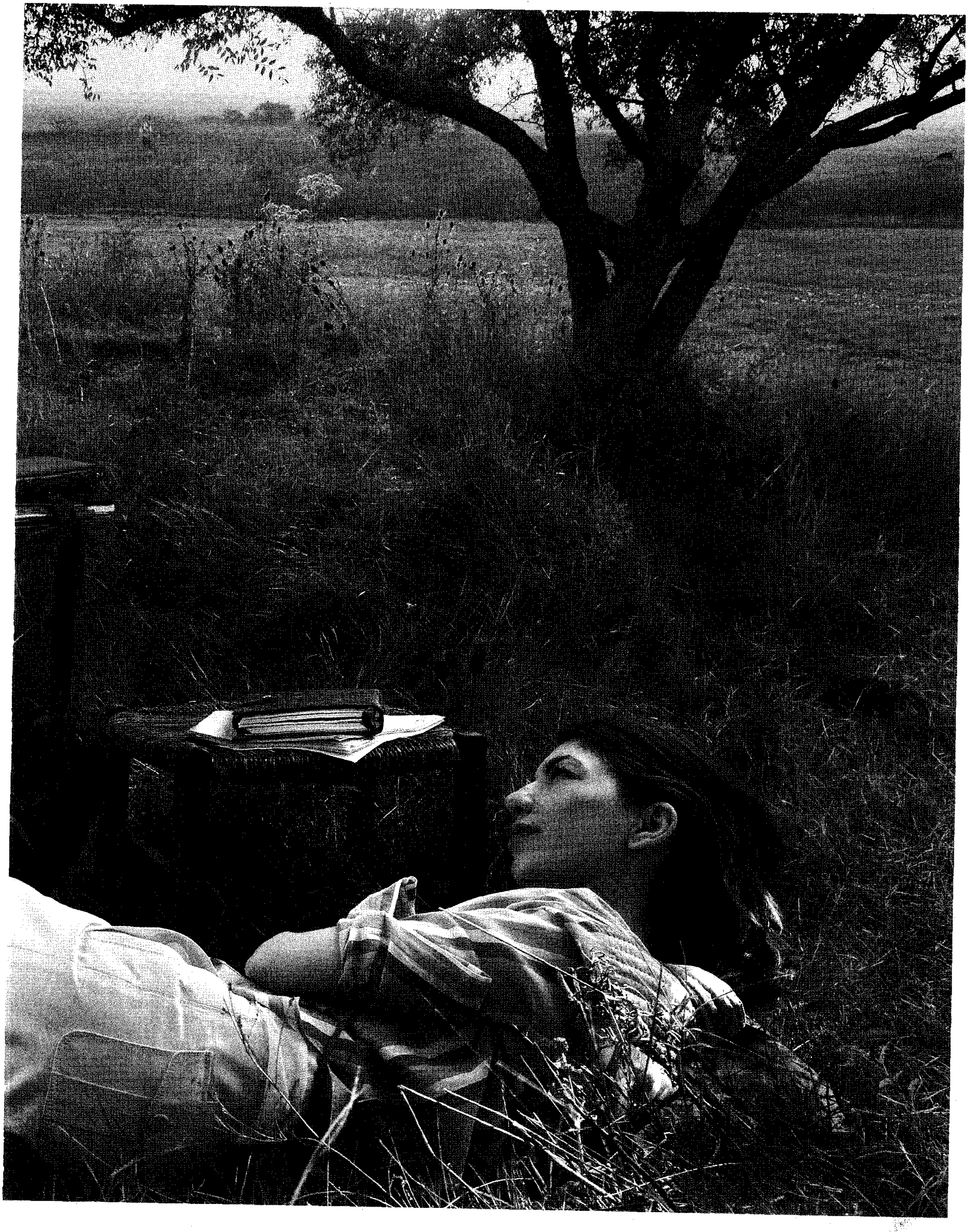

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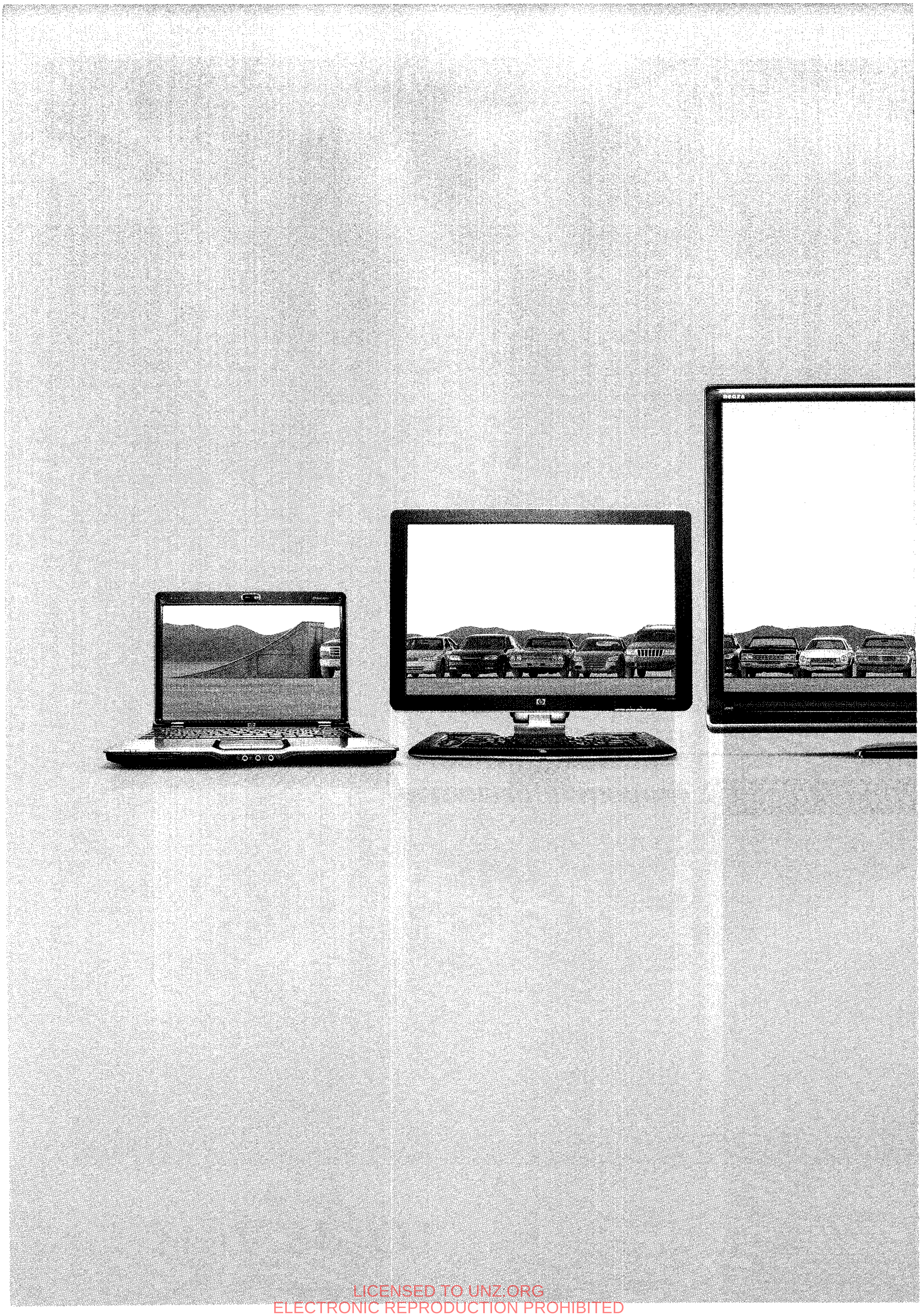

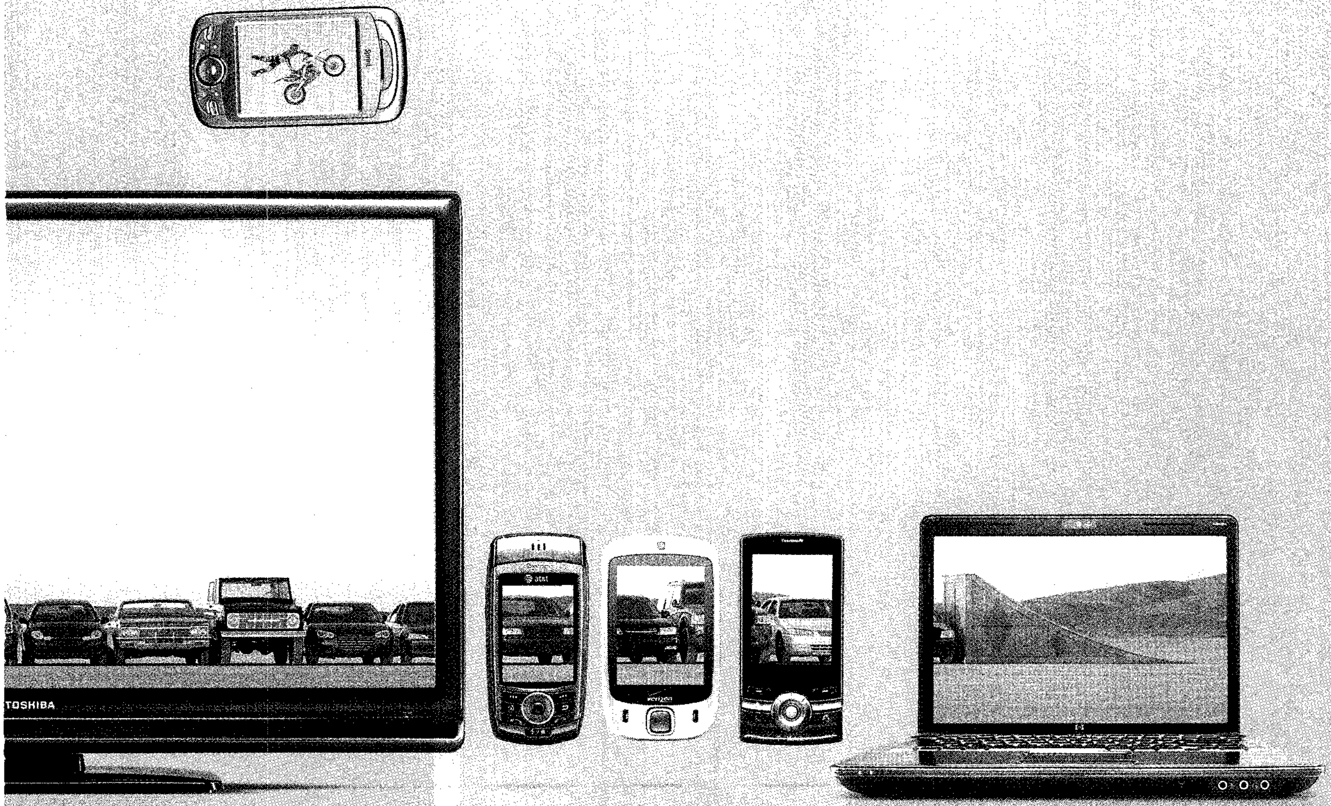

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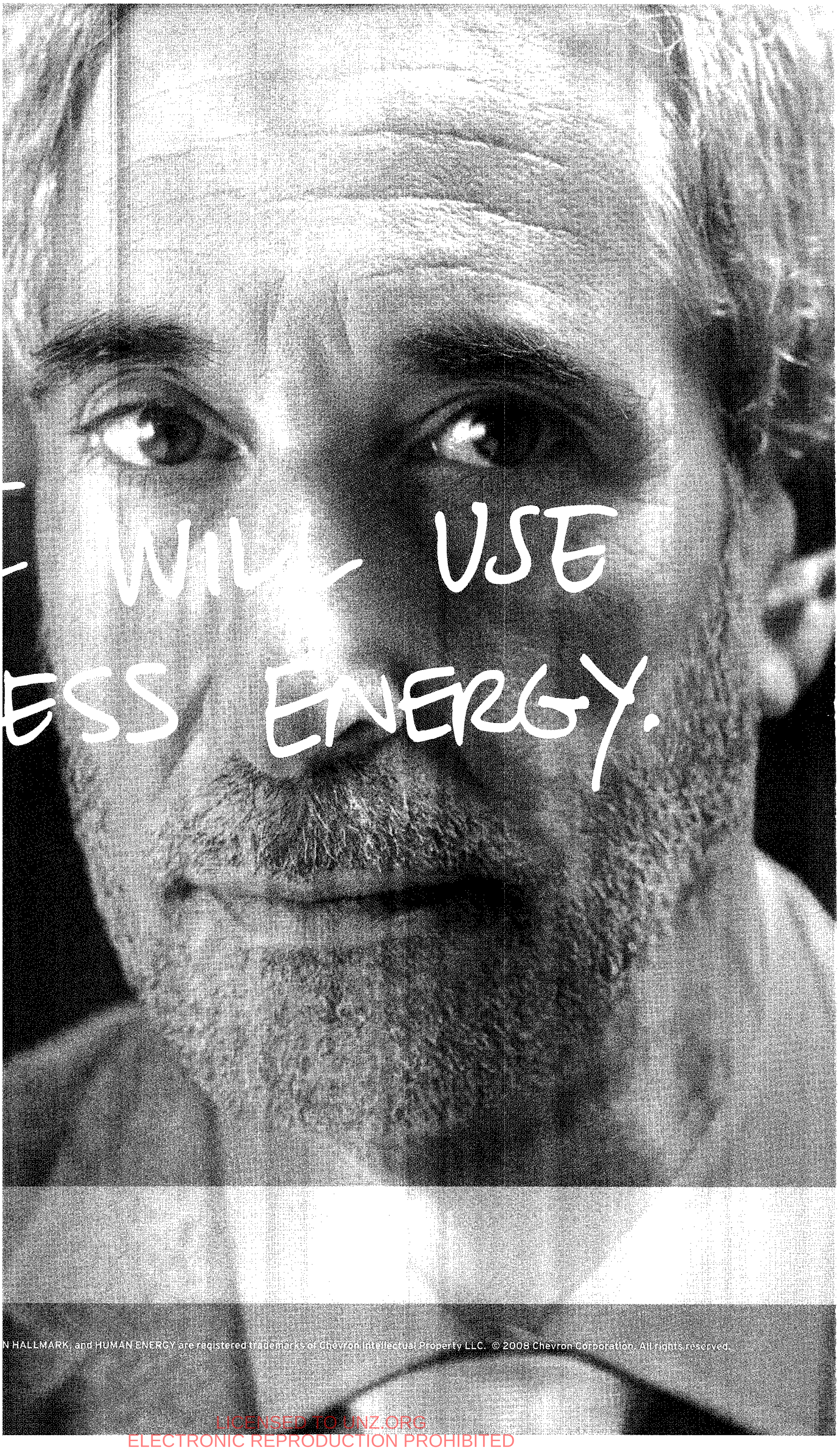
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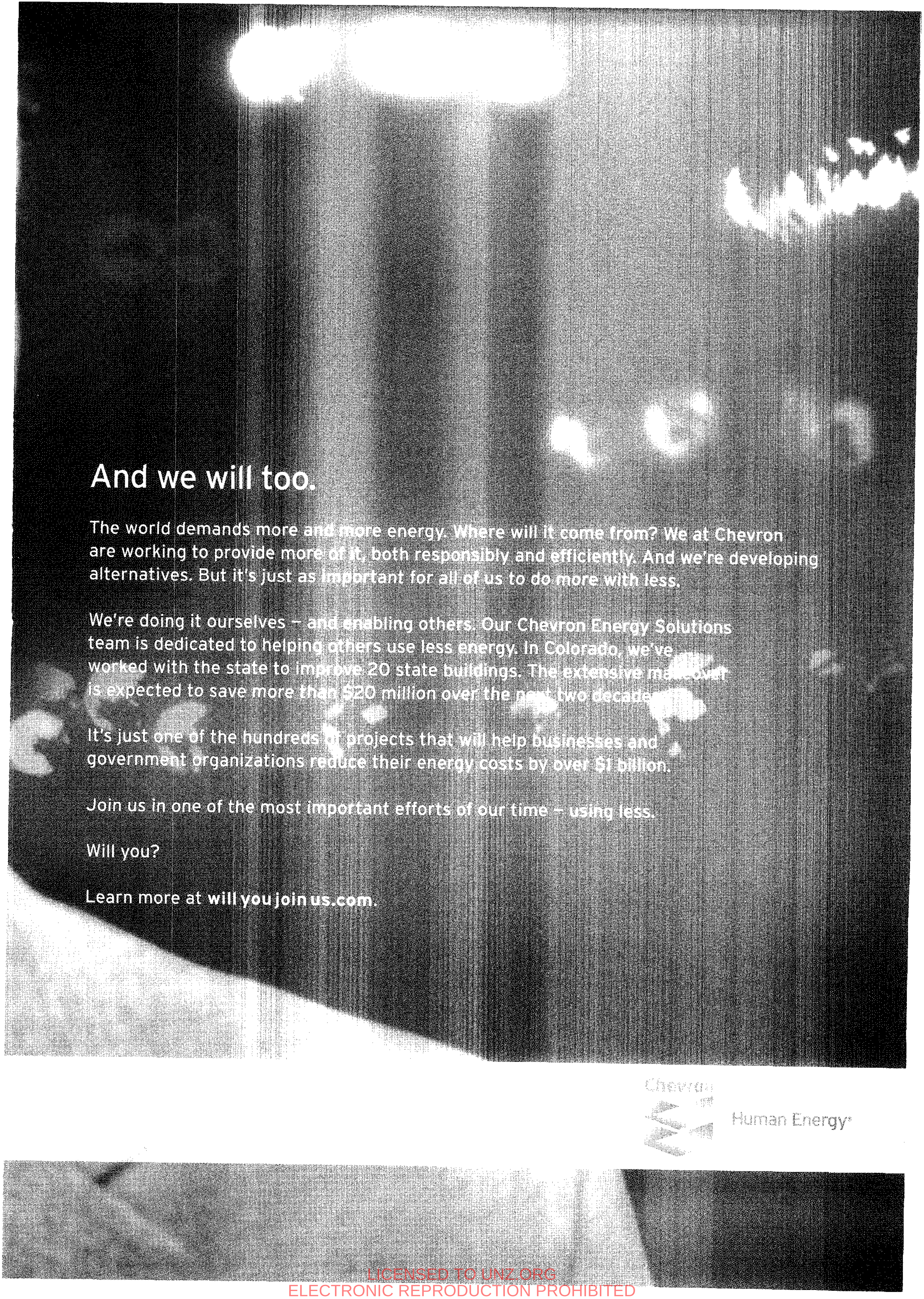

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Does the free market corrode moral character?

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CONTINUED ONLINE.

Robert B. Reich is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has published twelve books on public policy and has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton.

No.

Over the past several centuries, the world has seen the many ways in which an active free market spurs material and social progress while at the same time strengthening moral character. By contrast, people who have lived under the free market's primary modern rival, the ideologically-driven planned economy of state socialism, have suffered as economic performance stagnated, civil society withered, and morality was corroded. In recent decades, as planned economies collapsed under their own contradictions, this utopian experiment has proved to be a systematic failure…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Qinglian He is a Chinese economist and a former senior editor of the Shenzhen Legal Daily. *She is the author of* The Pitfalls of Modernization: The Economic and Social Problems of Contemporary China *and* The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China.

Certainly. Or does it?

It is clear that the ferocious competition of interests and passions, the mad rule of money, and materialism as the measure of all things — in short, the free market, released from all rules and governed only by the greed of the most powerful — fatally corrodes our souls. This is what the great Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn thought at the end of his life.

This view was shared by the family of French thinkers of the 1930's called the "non-conformists," which included Charles Péguy and a few others. They saw commodity exchange as a source of depersonalization. It was also the thesis of an entire group of Christian (or simply spiritualist) thinkers who saw in the idea of the "free market" the death of moral values and the end of man's faith and aspiration to the absolute.

It was also — and this should put us on alert — one of the main themes of fascism and one of the reasons the masses were seduced by it. "Stop materialism!" it was proclaimed. "Put an end to destructive individualism and the social atomization against which fascism presents its good, safe, organic, and natural communities!" In short, watch out for the rule of "generalized equivalence" among human values (another term for the "market"), which the fascisms of every age have found anathema.

So then?

Well, the problem is actually more complicated than it seems…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Bernard-Henri Lévy, the French philosopher, has written more than thirty books, including the New York Times *bestseller* American Vertigo *(2006) and, most recently,* Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism *(2008), both published by Random House.*

It depends.

Free markets corrode some aspects of character while enhancing others. Whether the result is good, on balance, depends on how one envisions a good life. Much also depends on whether one believes other economic systems can do better. The question can only be answered by comparing realistic alternatives and by understanding how different systems promote divergent types of human character.

It is important to avoid thinking in terms of ideal models. In recent years there has been a tendency to think that free markets emerge spontaneously when state interference in the economy is removed. But free markets are not simply the absence of government…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

John Gray is emeritus professor at the London School of Economics. Among his recent books are False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism *(Granta) and* Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia *(Penguin).*

Yes, too often.

Critics rightfully grasp that the free market undermines the traditional, local

To read these essays in their entirety, or to receive a printed version, visit www.templeton.org/market arrangements that people depend on to teach and sustain morality. Consider especially the experience of children. They first learn morality from their families, with whom they are most emotionally bonded. Love attaches children to moral conventions and arouses essential moral emotions like sympathy and guilt. In a preindustrial society, these moral habits are further reinforced by the tribe or the village, as well as by religious institutions and folk tales. The developing child is surrounded by a kind of conspiracy of moral teachers, demonstrating lessons of character by word and (less reliably) by deed.

Market economies weaken this cultural conspiracy in three powerful ways. First, they introduce novelty, which challenges established cultural habits and moral verities. Second, they stir up individual desire in ways that can easily weaken the self-discipline and moral obligations that make free markets flourish. (As the sociologist Daniel Bell famously argued, markets can end up cannibalizing their own moral infrastructure.) And third, as they advance, market economies become more likely to treat the yet-to-be-socialized child as an autonomous, adult-like actor rather than as an immature dependent…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Kay S. Hymowitz is the William E. Simon Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a contributing editor at City Journal. *Her most recent book is* Marriage and Caste in America: Separate and Unequal Families in a Post-Marital Age.

To the contrary.

I can attest from personal experience that, if you try to talk about the free market

on today's university campuses, you will be buried in an avalanche of criticism of globalization. The opposition of faculty and students to the expansion of international markets stems largely from a sense of altruism. It proceeds from their concern about social and moral issues. Simply put, they believe that globalization lacks a human face. I take an opposite view. Globalization, I would argue, leads not only to the creation and spread of wealth but to ethical outcomes and to better moral character among its participants…

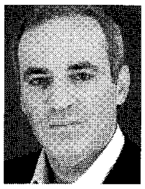
CONTINUED ONLINE.

Jagdish Bhagwati is University Professor of economics and law at Columbia University, senior fellow for international economics at the Council on Foreign Relations, and the author of In Defense of Globalization. *He writes widely on public policy and international trade.*

Yes, but…

other systems are worse. The free market is a crucible of competition that can bring out the basest in human nature. Competition is fierce, and when survival is at stake, there is no room for morality. But, to paraphrase Churchill, for all its flaws, the free market is still superior to all the other economic arrangements that have been tried.

At first it seems obvious that a system based entirely on self-interest would lead to the moral decay of the individual. If you pause momentarily to aid your brother during your struggle to reach the top—to beat your competitors, to maximize earnings, to buy a bigger house—you will be surpassed by those without such qualms…



CONTINUED ONLINE.

Former world chess champion Garry Kasparov is a leader of the pro-democracy coalition The Other Russia. He is the author of a book on decision-making, How Life Imitates Chess, *and speaks to business audiences worldwide. He lives in Moscow.*

No.

In fact, markets require moral character if they are to be truly free, and truly free markets, in turn, promote moral character. But free markets are no guarantor of moral character. As today's cultural environment shows, the free market tends to heighten certain moral risks.

As a politician, I might seem less qualified to answer this question than an economist. But as a politician, I have learned a great deal in the many years I've spent discussing freedom, morality, and economics with thousands of Americans. These experiences have taught me that the most important word in "free market" is "free"—that a free market is more of a political and moral reality than an economic one.

The free market depends on and rewards many human virtues. For example, market actors must develop the virtue of prudence—carefulness, foresight, and good judgment about the best way to apply a general rule in particular circumstances. Market actors must make and keep promises, even when an error in judgment means a particular promise is not profitable to keep…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Rick Santorum, a U.S. senator from Pennsylvania from 1995 to 2007 and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1991 to 1995, contributes a twice-monthly column to the Philadelphia Inquirer *and is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.*

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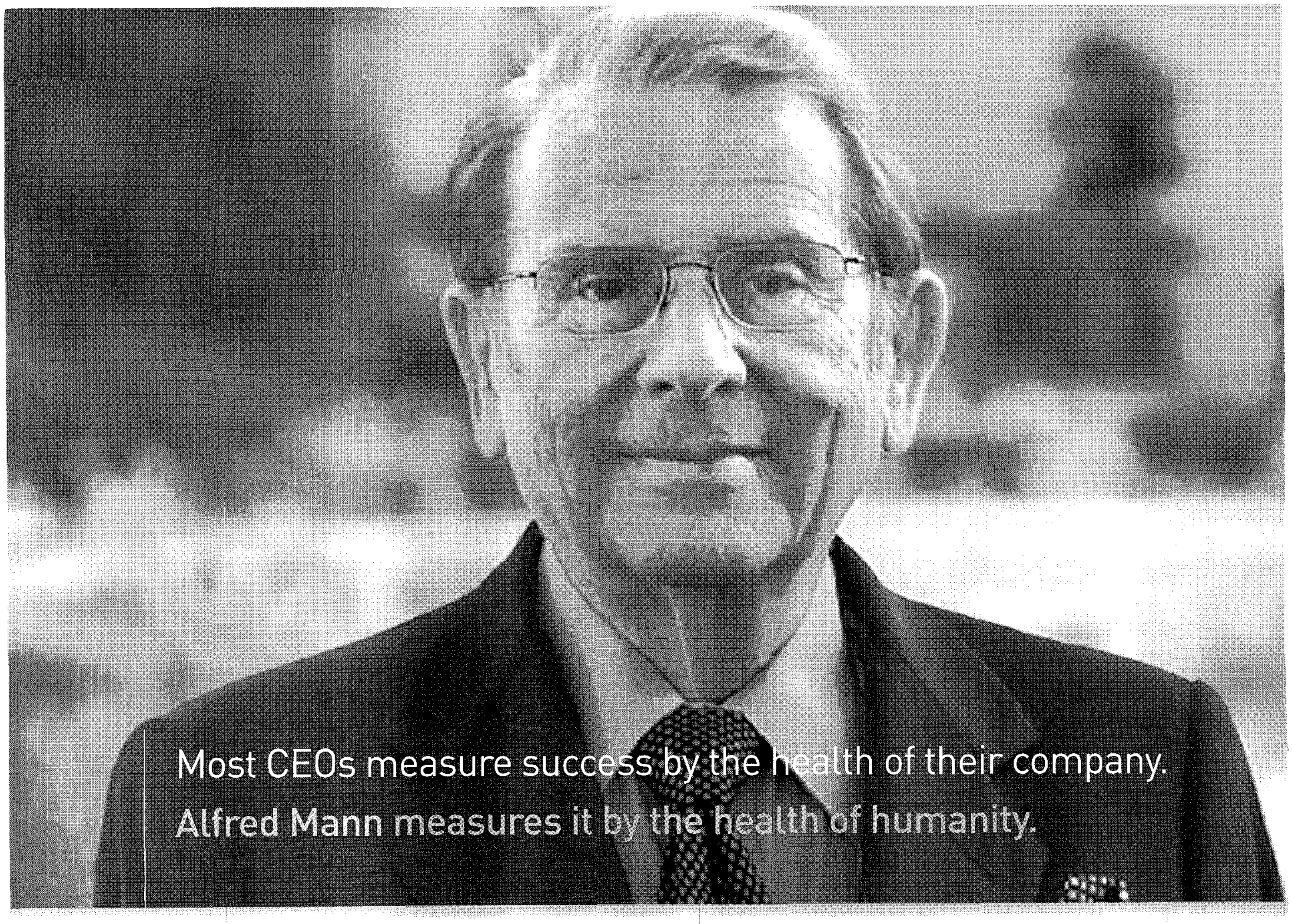
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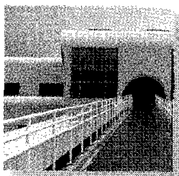

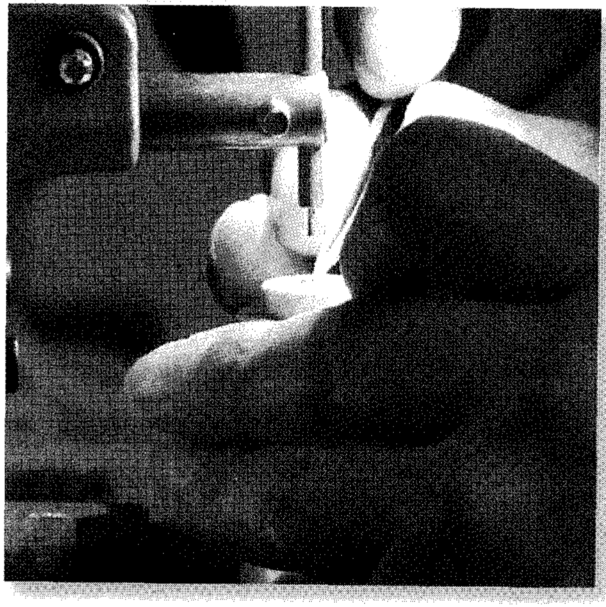

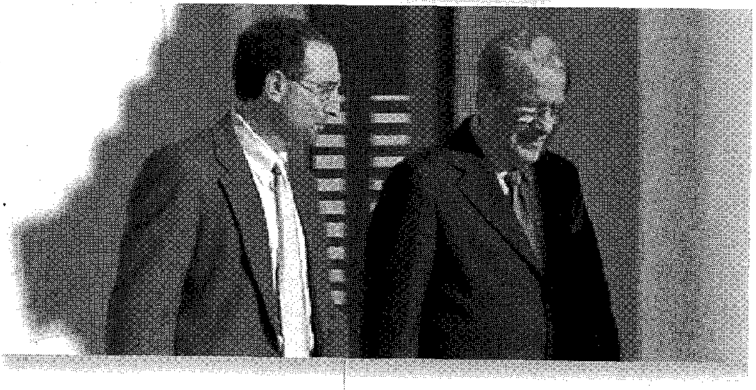

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THE POLITICS ISSUE

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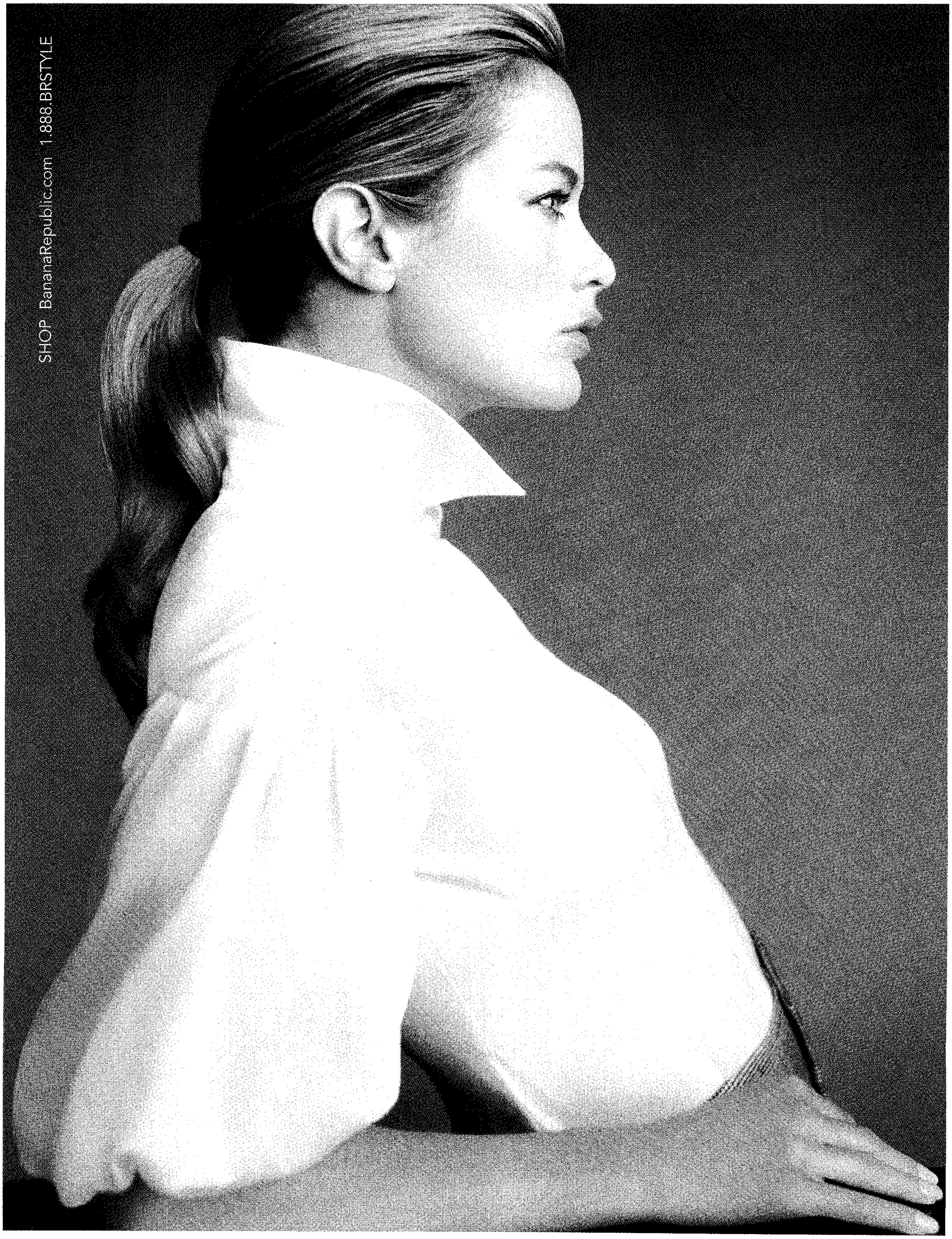
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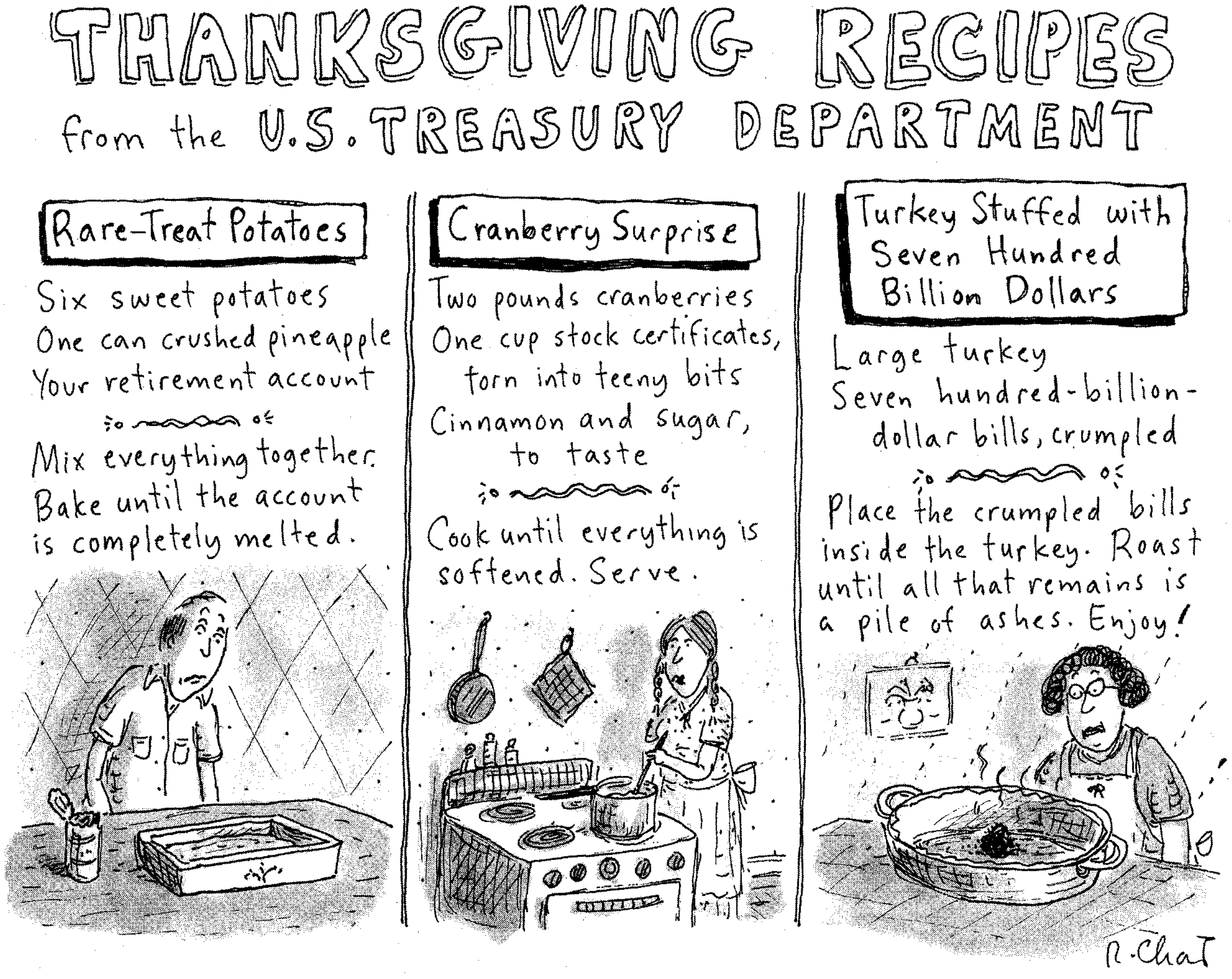
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CONTRIBUTORS

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James Wood ("Verbage," p. 74), the author of "How Fiction Works," is Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard.

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Bryan D. Dietrich (Poem, p. 115) won the 2001 Paris Review Prize in Poetry for "Krypton Nights," and will publish his third collection of poems, "The Assumption," next year.

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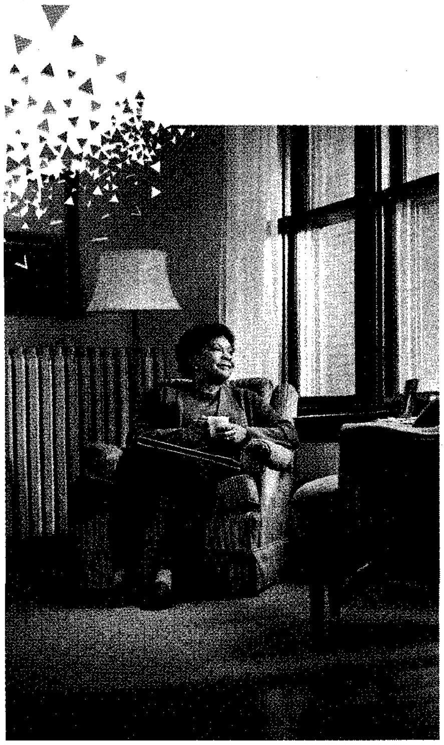

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READING BABAR

As a child growing up in postwar, post-colonial Britain, I loved the Babar books as much as Adam Gopnik obviously did, but for me the message is, with hindsight, an entirely embarrassing one ("Freeing the Elephants," September 22nd). With the possible exception of the much better written Narnia chronicles, the Babar stories may well be the most heavy-handed examples of child-centric colonialist propaganda in the European canon. Unmistakably, the premise of the "stories" is that if the familiar order of paternalist European empire is challenged by Rousseau-esque primitivism, chaos will ensue. Babar is sent back to Africa only after he has earned his diplomatic stripes in the eyes of "the Old Lady," and proved that he will be a model—or should that be "puppet"—ruler.

Simon Collins
New York City

I was brought up in France and spent hours of pure joy and fascination with Jean de Brunhoff's Babar. Later, I became conscious of the complexities behind the innocent fun, which Gopnik's wide-ranging artistic-cultural-political analysis brings to light. Celesteville itself, as Gopnik implies, is the capital of a well-ordered corporate Fascist state, as in that splendid parade of citizens marching according to their estate or profession—soldiers, musicians, carpenters, fishermen, etc. I used to wonder who was left to watch the parade. The Fascist theme is elaborated in a subsequent volume, when Babar's monkey friend, Zephir, visits his homeland, which is not a kingdom but a military dictatorship under a generalissimo.

Stanley G. Eskin
Brookline, Mass.

OPERATIC PASSION

The authors reviewed by Alex Ross need not revert to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to note a change in the behavior and protocol of opera audiences (Musical Events, September 8th). When I joined the Metropolitan Opera orchestra, in 1961, I saw standees engaging in fistfights over the relative merits of Tebaldi and Callas, or Bergonzi and Corelli, while spending a freezing winter's morning in line outside the old Met Opera House, on Thirty-ninth Street, just to assure a standing-room ticket in the family circle. Moreover, the salvos of catcalls and booing coming from the upper balconies whenever a diva or a tenor sang an aria off pitch are no longer fashionable (except perhaps at La Scala, in Milan, where a tossed ripe tomato may still accentuate the heckling). What is conspicuously lacking nowadays in Met audiences, despite the general manager Peter Gelb's innovative mass-media opera promotions, is the unbridled passion so evident in the opera fans of the old Met.

Les Dreyer
New York City

THE RIOT ACT

John Colapinto, in describing the climax of "Do the Right Thing," writes that Mookie incites a riot by throwing a garbage can through the pizzeria window ("Outside Man," September 22nd). He might have added that Mookie throws the can at a moment of impasse, when the crowd, furious at the death of Raheem, is about to turn on Sal and his son. This act, by a character whom Colapinto describes as the one who "bridged the white and black worlds," also bridges the two philosophies of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X that Lee quotes at the end of the film. Mookie has done the right thing. It's just this sort of missed detail that perpetuates the idea that Lee is a simplistic and divisive artist.

Nathaniel Drake
Brooklyn, N.Y.

•

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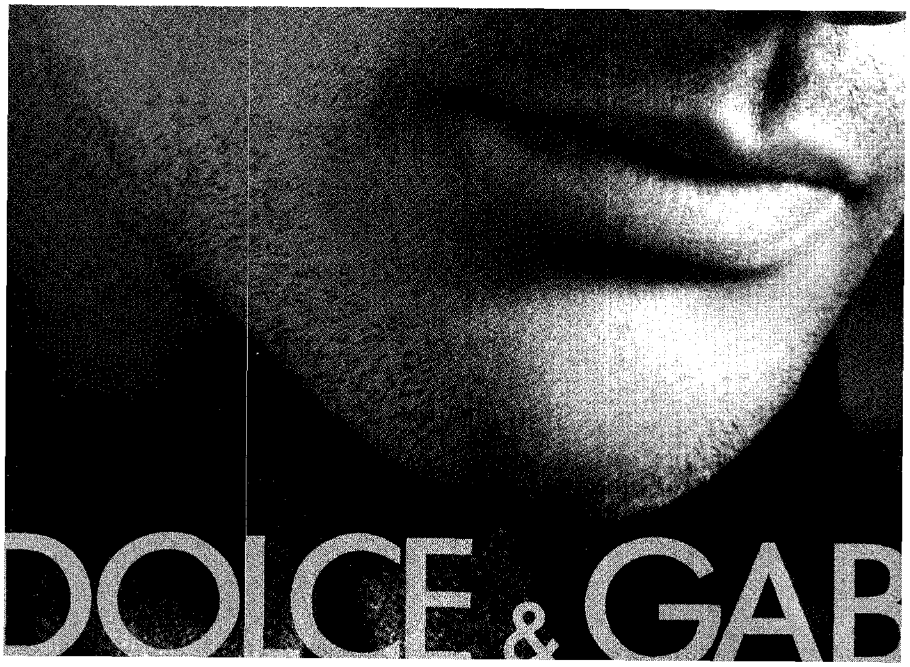
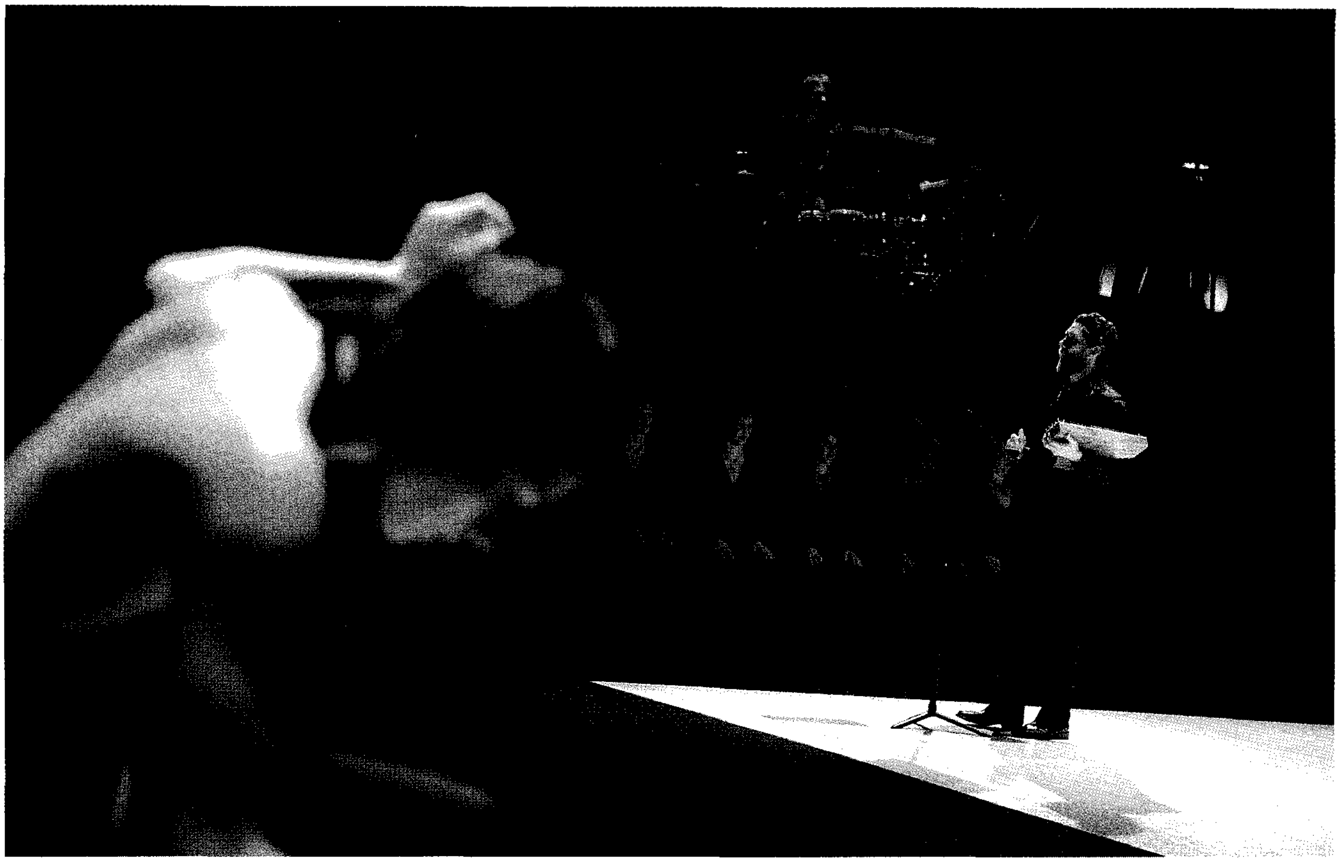


DOLCE & GAB



Iannis Xenakis's "Oresteia," at Miller Theatre. Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
12	13	14	8	9	10	11

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
ENCORE!

The National Theatre of Scotland's gorgeous "Black Watch," a movement-and-interview-based stage piece by Gregory Burke, about a historic Scottish regiment and its involvement in the current war in Iraq, premièred at the Edinburgh Festival in 2006 and was widely acclaimed when it appeared at St. Ann's Warehouse, in Brooklyn, last season. New Yorkers who missed it then have a second chance, as the show has returned to St. Ann's. (See page 20.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE EYES HAVE IT

For more than thirty years, the mysterious San Francisco-based rock and performance-art group the Residents, who wear gigantic eyeball masks onstage, have been creating compelling high-concept projects. They bring their latest, "The Bunny Boy," to the Blender Theatre. (See page 22.)

ART
INSECT ASIDE

Damien Hirst may be finished with butterflies, but the American Museum of Natural History is still interested in the delicate creatures. For the eleventh consecutive year, the museum has installed a vivarium housing hundreds of tropical species, from iridescent blue morphos to scarlet swallowtails, in the Hall of Oceanic Birds. (See page 28.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LITTLE ITALY

With New York City Opera mostly on hiatus this season, the city's smaller companies have a chance to shine. One is Dicapo Opera, which will offer an intimate production of Puccini's "Turandot" at its theatre on the Upper East Side. (See page 37.)

MOVIES
HERE TO ETERNITY

Beryl Sokoloff, who died in 2006, was a painter and a musician who also made more than seventy-five short experimental documentaries in Super-8 and 16-mm. Anthology Film Archives offers a dozen of them, including "My Mirrored Hope," about a house made of window frames, "Fire," in which he edits disaster footage out of chronological order, and many about street life in Chelsea, where he lived for decades. (See page 44.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE INTERNATIONAL

Sabina Sciubba has lived in Italy, Germany, France, and New York, and is currently the lead singer of a band called Brazilian Girls, which contains no Brazilians and only one girl. The group's third album, "New York City," is sung in five languages, though not all simultaneously. Perhaps the most anthemic song, "Good Time," is in English. "We just want to have a good time," Sciubba sings, and the other musicians answer, "All the time." A few months ago, Sciubba called the song political, and said that the most important line was "Some people have nothing and want nothing and are free." For anyone planning to party in New York right now, this constitutes a game plan. Sciubba sometimes performs wearing a black trash bag labelled "EuroTrash"; though the band's bassy, cushy music is played in boutique hotels, it is closer in spirit to Weimar cabaret. Sciubba won't be hanging around the city long—she is five months pregnant and moving to Paris after this tour. The Brazilian Girls appear at Terminal 5 on Oct. 10.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

QUICKHONEY

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALL MY SONS
John Lithgow, Dianne Wiest, Patrick Wilson, and Katie Holmes star in Arthur Miller's play from 1947, about a businessman's shady dealings during the Second World War. Simon McBurney directs. In previews. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE ATHEIST
A dark comedy written by Ronan Noone, directed by Justin Waldman and starring Campbell Scott, about an unethical reporter. In previews. Opens Oct. 12. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-352-3101.)

BEDROOM FARCE
The Actor's Company Theatre presents Alan Ayckbourn's comedy about a wild Saturday night for four married couples. Jenn Thompson directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 13. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL
Stephen Daldry directs the musical based on the movie, about a working-class boy who discovers a love for ballet. Elton John wrote the music, and Lee Hall wrote the book and lyrics. In previews. (Imperial, 240 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BLACK WATCH
The National Theatre of Scotland returns to St. Ann's Warehouse with Gregory Burke's play, based on the Scottish Army's perspective on the Iraq war. Directed by John Tiffany. Previews begin Oct. 9. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

BLASTED
Sarah Kane's first play centers on a rape in a Leeds hotel room during an unnamed war. Sarah Benson directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 9. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-352-3101.)

A BODY OF WATER
Primary Stages presents Lee Blessing's drama, about a vacationing couple who don't know where they are. Maria Mileaf directs. Starring Christine Lahti, Laura Odeh, and Michael Cristofer. In previews. Opens Oct. 14. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BOYS' LIFE
Second Stage opens its season with Howard Korder's play from 1988, about three college friends living in New York. Michael Greif ("Rent") directs. In previews. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

CATO
At the Flea, Jim Simpson directs Joseph Addison's play about a Roman statesman who fought in a civil war against Julius Caesar. Andre De Shields and Reg E. Cathey star. Previews begin Oct. 10. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

CLAY
A one-man coming-of-age hip-hop musical, written and performed by Matt Sax, kicks off the LCT3 initiative, presented by Lincoln Center Theatre. In previews. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

DORUNTINE
Blessed Unrest of New York and Teatri Oda of Kosovo present this play, based on an Albanian allegory of forbidden love. Previews begin Oct. 9. Opens Oct. 11. (Interart, 500 W. 52nd St. 212-631-8789.)

THE FOURPOSTER
The Keen Company opens its season with a revival of Jan de Hartog's play from 1951, set at the turn of the century, about a thirty-five-year marriage. In previews. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

IRMA LA DOUCE
Musicals Tonight presents the musical from 1960, about an impoverished French law student who falls in love with a well-off prostitute. Opens Oct. 14. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-868-4444.)

KINDNESS
Playwrights Horizons presents the première of a new play by Adam Rapp, who also directs, about a woman who takes her teen-age son to Manhattan to escape their life in Illinois. Annette O'Toole stars. In previews. Opens Oct. 13. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE LANGUAGE OF TREES
The world première of a play by Steven Levenson, about an American translator who goes to a war zone in the Middle East, leaving his wife and son in the hands of a friendly neighbor. Alex Timbers directs. In previews. (Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

LOVE CHILD
Primary Stages presents a comedy written and performed by Daniel Jenkins and Robert Stanton, about the opening night of a play whose audience is so affected by the work that they feel the need to respond to the actors during the performance. Previews begin Oct. 12. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
The world première of the Tony-winning playwright Frank McGuinness's adaptation of Ibsen's play from 1892, about a brilliant architect who makes empty promises to a young girl. Ciarán O'Reilly directs. Previews begin Oct. 10. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE OEDIPUS CYCLE
The world première of Peter Constantine's translation of the Sophocles plays; Shepard Sobel directs. Previews begin Oct. 14. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

ROCK OF AGES
Chris D'Arienzo wrote this play, set in the eighties, about a young Hollywood musician who dreams of being in an arena-rock band. Kristin Hanggi directs. In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

ROMANTIC POETRY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new musical by John Patrick Shanley ("Moonstruck," "Doubt") and Henry Krieger ("Dreamgirls"), a romance set in Manhattan and its suburbs. In previews. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

SPEED-THE-PLOW
Raúl Esparza, Elisabeth Moss, and Jeremy Piven star in David Mamet's play about the dark side of the film industry. Neil Pepe directs. In previews. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

SPIN
The StageFARM presents a series of short plays by Adam Rapp, Gina Gionfriddo, Judith Thompson, Elizabeth Meriwether, and Mark Schultz. Alex Kilgore and Evan Cabnet direct. In previews. Opens Oct. 11. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

TO BE OR NOT TO BE
Nick Whitby wrote this play, based on the film of the same name, a black comedy set in Warsaw in 1939, about a theatre troupe that becomes involved in spy games during the war. Casey Nicholaw directs. The Manhattan Theatre Club production stars David Rasche, Peter Maloney, and Jan Maxwell. In previews. Opens Oct. 14. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

EQUUS
In Peter Shaffer's 1973 play (slickly directed by Thea Sharrock, at the Broadhurst), Martin Dysart, or Dice Heart (the admirable Richard Griffiths), a sort of psychic detective, solves the problem of Alan Strang (Daniel Radcliffe), a psychotic teen-ager and would-be centaur who gouged out the eyes of six horses with a metal spike at the stable where he works. In this crowd-pleasing balderdash, Shaffer both trivializes psychiatry and exploits it. The play is written in the most conventional of forms. There is no space for thought, for dreaming, or for joy—just exposition. Still, it is always a pleasure to be in the company of the wry Mr. Griffiths, a big man with a big heart. The world seems to want to know if the diminutive Radcliffe, the centerpiece of the "Harry Potter" film franchise, will make it into adulthood with his star intact. The answer is yes. What's more, in this time of economic crisis he

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gives new meaning to the term “naked short.” (Reviewed in our issue of 10/6/08.) (235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAULT LINES
Naked Angels presents a new play by Stephen Belber, a dark comedy about two friends on a boys' night out. Noah Emmerich and Josh Lucas star; David Schwimmer directs. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

FIFTY WORDS
“You are such a goofbag,” Jan (Elizabeth Marvel) says to her husband, Adam (Norbert Leo Butz), early in Michael Weller's new play. They're at home in Brooklyn, and their son, Greg, age nine, is away at his first sleepover. Alone at last, they stay up all night flirting with and sniping at each other, years of suppressed rage and mutual neediness coming to the surface. Adam ends many of his lines with a half whine or a disingenuous question—Jan says, “I hate it when you do that calm sarcastic thing,” and so may the audience. Soon, she's weeping and throwing things, her ruined mascara making her look like Alice Cooper on a bender. The two actors give their all, but Weller's script is only just barely good enough to justify the hell it puts them—and us—through. Austin Pendleton directs. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

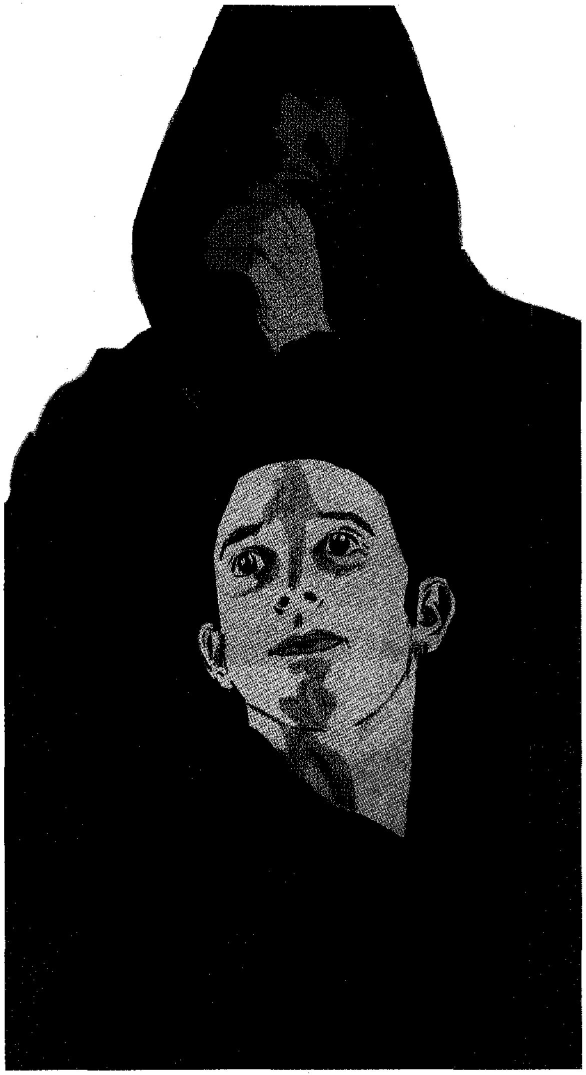
THE GLASS CAGE
The wealthy and sheltered McBains of Toronto, in J. B. Priestley's brilliant drama from 1957, are a smug, spoiled, straitlaced bunch, and they're certain that their three young relatives, coming to visit for the first time, will be savages, like their Indian mother, and drunkards, like their dissolute father. And they're right: the visitors are as hot and wild as fire, and they come with a plan to do great harm. In this fully relevant revival, the performances by Saxon Palmer and Jeanine Serralles, as two of the three young people, pop like bright flowers. Directed by Lou Jacob. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

IN CONFLICT
The season opener at the Culture Project comes from Temple University via the Edinburgh Fringe; the young cast brings to life interviews with Iraq-war veterans, adapted by Douglas C. Wager from Yvonne Latty's book. The broad range of subjects includes a Russian immigrant from Sheepshead Bay (Stan Demidoff) who lost his foot in an explosion; a Navajo veteran (Sam Paul) who is unable to get treatment for P.T.S.D. at his reservation; a student (Amanda Holston) who enlisted for tuition aid and wound up in Iraq; and a traumatized Army private from the Bronx and a wounded marine from Avenue D (both played, convincingly, by Damon Williams). The show isn't artistically flawless—the quality of the monologues is uneven, and video clips of Latty weighing in on her subjects become grating—but it's worthy, compelling, and not without humor and hope. (27 Barrow St. 212-352-3101.)

IRENA'S VOW
In real life, Irena Gut, a young Catholic woman living in Poland during the Second World War, saved the lives of twelve Jewish friends by hiding them for years in the cellar of the home in which she was the maid—a villa occupied by a high-ranking German officer. Dan Gordon's “Irena's Vow” is upsetting—Gut (played valiantly by Tovah Feldshuh) tells her story in hindsight, and doesn't hold back any details about what she went through (including beatings and gang rape) and what she saw (mass murder, infanticide, etc.). And yet this simple, literal, and elegant show is not solemn; it is schmaltzy and riddled with silly jokes. Still, for the second half of “Irena's Vow,” part of the backdrop, along with graphic black-and-white photographs from the time, is the sound of the audience crying. This is important: as Gut points out, soon the only people left to tell these stories will be those who bore witness to the telling. Directed by Michael Parva. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-352-3101.)

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS
Frank Langella stars in Robert Bolt's 1961 drama about Sir Thomas More, who voiced his objections to King Henry VIII when he left the Catholic Church. Doug Hughes directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

OUTSIDE INN
International Culture Lab presents this murder mystery, in which a German civic engineer becomes involved in the death of his boss. Written by Andreas Jungwirth and directed by Melanie Dryer. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)



“Clay,” a one-man hip-hop musical by Matt Sax.

RACHEL DOMM

THE SEAGULL
Kristin Scott Thomas, Peter Sarsgaard, Mackenzie Crook (from the British version of “The Office”), and Zoe Kazan star in Chekhov's play, in a translation by Christopher Hampton. Ian Rickson directs the Royal Court Theatre production. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUNKEN RED
Toneelhuis & Ro Theatre present a play adapted from the autobiographical novel by Jeroen Brouwers, about his time in a Japanese internment camp in Jakarta. Guy Cassiers directs, with Dirk Roofthooft. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through Oct. 11.)

13
Jason Robert Brown (“Parade”) wrote the music and lyrics and Dan Elish and Robert Horn wrote the book for this musical, about a New York City teen-ager who is forced to move to Indiana with his newly divorced mother. Jeremy Sams directs. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE TEMPEST
At the start of the play (at the Classic Stage Company, under the direction of Brian Kulick), Alonso, the king of Naples (Michael Potts), is on his way home from Tunis, where he and some members of his court, including his son and heir, Ferdinand (the stellar Stark Sands), have just attended his daughter's wedding to an African. They are shipwrecked on an island, where they find Prospero (Mandy Patinkin), his daughter, Miranda (the increasingly brilliant Elisabeth Waterston), and his two familiars, a sprite named Ariel (Angel Desai) and his slave, Caliban (Nyambi Nyambi). In this production, Patinkin doesn't seem to connect with the other actors or with the text; he is isolated in the part. One suspects that he is less an actor than a monologuist, interested mostly in his song of the self. (9/29/08) (136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

WIG OUT!
Erik King stars in Tarell Alvin McCraney's new play, in which two drag-queen houses duke it out. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

Also Playing

ABSINTHE: Spiegeltent, South Street Seaport, Pier 17. 212-279-4200. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BOEING-BOEING:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **CELEBRITY AUTOBIOGRAPHY:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-868-4444. **ENTER LAUGHING:** St. Peter's Theatre, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-935-5820. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **LADY:** Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through Oct. 11. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **A TALE OF TWO CITIES:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **[TITLE OF SHOW]:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 8: In the early nineties, **Digable Planets** forged a fusion of jazz and hip-hop that sounded to some like it might peaceably conquer the world. Critics and much of the public embraced their 1993 album, “Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space),” and the single “Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat),” but then the spell wore off. The group hung around for a few years before calling it quits, but they're back together. Oct. 10: The Bronx-born rapper **Kool Keith** possesses enough fictional personas to fill the Manhattan phone book. A founding member of the old-school icons the Ultramagnetic MCs, Keith has also performed as the extraterrestrial surgeon Dr. Octagon, the suicidal Dr. Dooom, and the DAT-hating Robbie Analog. He's currently working with his rapping friends **Tim Dog** and **Marc Live** in a group called Project X.

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 9-11: The **Residents**, the iconic San Francisco-based art-and-

*Tahoe Hybrid shown. For more information, go to GreenCar.com. †Excludes other GM vehicles. **Based on 2008 GM [illegible] music collective, have a compelling new song cycle and stage piece called "The Bunny Boy." The core group, whose origins and identities remain shrouded in mystery, dates back to the late sixties or early seventies. They formed in California, where they developed a sui-generis style that mixed minimalist rock and performance-art theatrics (the members are known for wearing giant eyeball masks that preserve their anonymity). Like many of the Residents' projects, "The Bunny Boy" has an elaborate backstory; in this case, it concerns a long-lost colleague known as Bunny, who mailed the group an S.O.S.-like DVD of primitive videos from the Greek island of Patmos. Unable to reach the missing Bunny, the group pays tribute to their friend by re-creating the videos and writing lonely songs about him. Like so much about the Residents, the degree of truth or fiction in the story is unknowable, but these pieces—their best in several years—are hypnotic, venturing into dreamy pop territory broken up by mesmerizing guitar solos and Krautrock-inspired electronica.

Oliver Sieber's photograph "Ulala, Bad Neuheim, 2007," at Silverstein.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 8: The **Wedding Present** is a longtime British rock institution renowned for maniacally strummed electric guitars and the forlorn lyrics and romantic misfires of its lead singer, Dave Gedge. The band went on hiatus in the mid-nineties, and Gedge pursued a more pop-oriented project, Cinerama. He revived the Wedding Present two years ago, and the group has a renewed vigor. Their latest album, "El Rey" (produced by the scrupulous noisenik and one-time Nirvana producer Steve Albini), mines the same familiar ground, but its frantic buzz is no less cathartic. Oct. 9: West African music has not generally been associated with North Carolina. The Asheville-based quintet **Toubab Krewe** blends African rhythms with rock. Its members have spent time in Mali, Ivory Coast, and Guinea, picking up new instruments, including the kora, a twenty-one-string harp, and the soku, a type of fiddle. Their music avoids cliché through authentic extrapolations of traditional Manding beats, percussion, and a jam-band flair. Oct. 10: The **Heartless Bastards.** Erika Wennerstrom, a petite woman with a cavernous voice, leads this high-voltage trio from Cincinnati in overpowering blues-rock originals. They're touring with the up-and-coming folk-blues rocker **Langhorne Slim.**

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
30 Lafayette Ave. (718-636-4100)—The Spanish pop sensation **Huecco** (born Ivahn Sevillano), who has long dreadlocks and a background in hip-hop, delivers ebullient songs that appeal to fans of dance music and slick guitar rock alike. He makes his U.S. début on Oct. 11, as part of the Next Wave Festival.

BROOKLYN MASONIC TEMPLE
317 Clermont Ave., at Lafayette Ave., Fort Greene (212-260-4700)—Oct. 14-16: **TV on the Radio,** a group of fiercely experimental indie rockers with a sound that's a mixed bag of jittery rhythms, angular guitar riffs, and unconventional instrumentation (anchored by Tunde Adebimpe's vocals), is back on the scene with a new album, "Dear Science."

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—The French singer **Emilie Simon** favors layered songs that often incorporate unusual instrumentation; for a song on the soundtrack of the original French release of "March of the Penguins," she clicked ice cubes together to create a beat. Her work has been somewhat difficult to find—her sole U.S. release is "The Flower Book," from 2006. She's at this Flatiron club on Wednesdays through Oct. 29.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Oct. 8: Since the late eighties, **GWAR** (an acronym for God What an Awful Racket) has laid claim to a juvenile middle ground between prurient thrash metal and performance-art spectacle. The band performs songs like "Womb with a View," "We Kill Everything," and "Pre-Skool Prostitute" while elaborately costumed as libidinous alien conquerors (with names like Oderus Urungus and Jizmak da Gusha). The result resembles a deranged version of "The Muppet Show." The group's albums are dismissible, but its live shows are another story. Oct. 11-12: **Killing Joke,** lauded in the post-punk, metal, goth, and industrial communities, first surfaced in 1979, throwing a heavy, tribal groove and apocalyptic world view onto punk's smoldering fire. Their original mission statement was to replicate the sound of "the earth vomiting," and they've honed their attack over the years, inspiring the likes of Metallica and Nirvana. After years of infighting and acrimony, and a hiatus dating back to the mid-nineties, the band's original lineup—featuring the powerhouse drummer "Big" Paul Ferguson, who had been absent from the ranks since 1998, and the revered producer Martin (Youth) Glover, on bass—has reformed to nauseate the planet anew.

GRAND BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—In 1954, a Queens teen-ager named Robert Moog started selling homemade electronic musical instruments; within a decade he had invented the Moog synthesizer, a bulky keyboard that became a staple of pop-music compositions. Moog died in 2005, and for the past few years he's been honored with an annual event. Moogfest started at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, but it has since moved to this larger space. A number of fans of the instrument, including **Umphrey's McGee,** the **Eric McFadden Trio, Bernie Worrell, Aron Magner** (of the Disco Biscuits), and **Jamie Shields** (from the New Deal), join forces on Oct. 13.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 8: The Lambchop leader **Kurt Wagner** performs a solo show. When he's on his own, Wagner adds a bit of homespun theatrical flair: he strings a clothesline across the stage in front of him, and when he finishes a song he clips a piece of notepaper containing the lyrics to it, eventually blocking the audience's view of him. Oct. 9: **Les Nubians.** The sisters Hélène and Celia Faussart, who were raised in Bordeaux (with a brief sojourn in Chad), reconfigure American hip-hop and jazz with severe Continental chic.

"LET'S ZYDECO"
Oct. 12: The concert series dedicated to the indigenous music of Louisiana brings the lively accordionist **Leroy Thomas** and his band, the **Zydeco Roadrunners,** to Connolly's, an Irish pub in midtown with a fine wooden dance floor. (121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—Oct. 11: **Ray LaMontagne** was four years out of high school and working at a shoe factory in Maine when he heard a song on the radio one morning that changed his life: "Tree Top Flyer," by Stephen Stills. He quit his job, sold his van, bought a guitar, and immersed himself in the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding. After LaMontagne started opening for established folkies at home, the governor of Maine introduced him to music-business contacts. Fast-forward a bit, and he's playing this Art Deco palace. His latest album, "Gossip in the Grain," was produced by Ethan Johns, who has worked with Ryan Adams, Kings of Leon, and the Jayhawks.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—Oct. 9: **Chandler Travis Philharmonic.** The irreverent guitarist, singer, and composer Travis, who lives on Cape Cod and has been known to perform barefoot and in his pajamas, swings by with a slightly scaled-down version of his big band. Travis has been in show biz for some four decades. For years, beginning in the seventies, he co-led the musical act that opened for George Carlin on his tours. His other band, the Incredible Casuals, got its start in the eighties and is a fixture on the New England music scene. Expect a long night of playful original songs that mix mind-bending wordplay with Dixieland jazz, shimmering rock, and horn-fuelled R. & B. Oct. 13: The swinging sounds of the **Western Caravan,** a local eight-piece band with its heart in Texas. Oct. 14: The accomplished and eclectic guitarist **Smokey Hormel.**

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Oct. 12: A fine night of traditional Irish music to benefit the Mercy Center, a Bangkok-based charity, with the **Green Fields of America** (featuring Mick Moloney, Billy McComiskey, Ivan Goff, Jerry O'Sullivan, Dana Lyn, Athena Tergis, and Robbie O'Connell) and a **Cherish the Ladies** reunion, among many other acts.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—Oct. 10: The shimmering sounds of New York's own **Brazilian Girls.**

www.barcap.com

PART OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

UNTITLED # 37 [ITHAKA], 2008 © ALEXANDRA HEDISON

Barclays Capital is proud to sponsor photographer Alexandra Hedison and her latest exhibition 'Ithaka'.

We applaud and encourage her unique vision and dedication.

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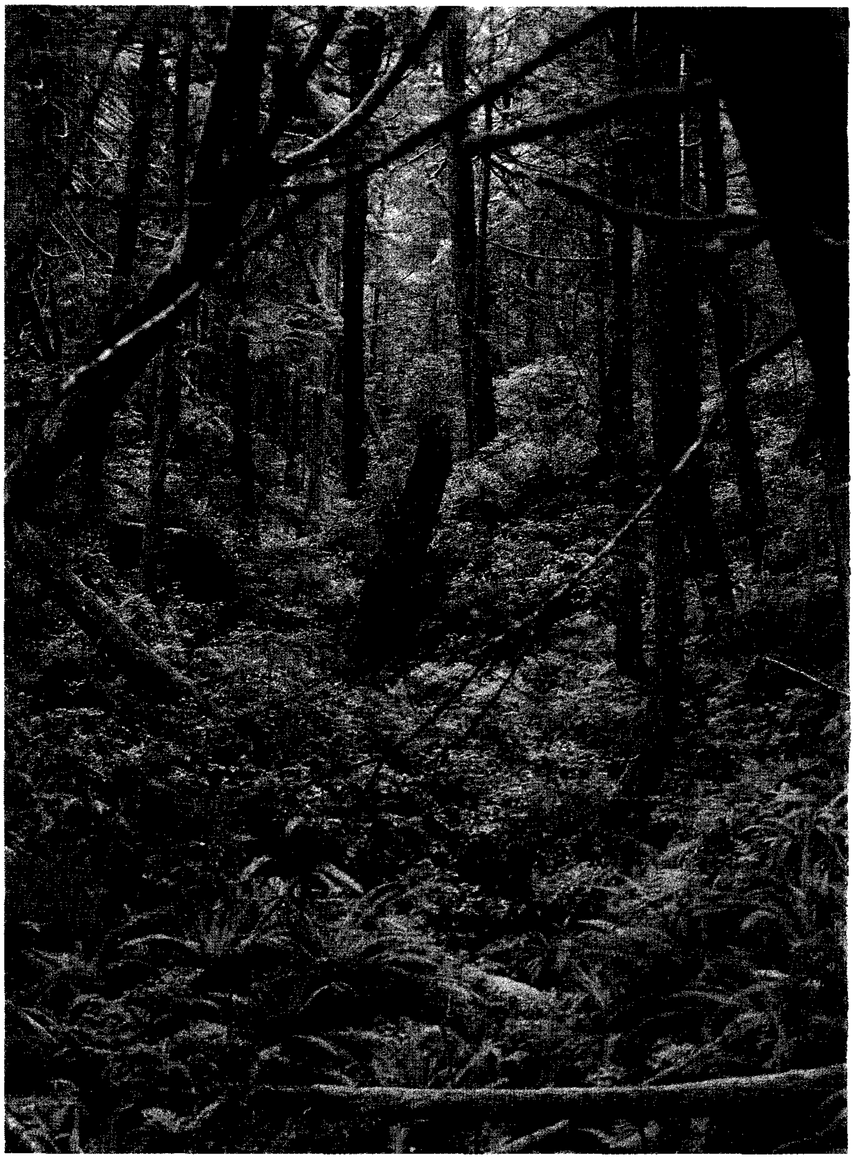

UNTITLED #27 (ITHAKA), 2008 ©ALEXANDRA HEDISON

Forest Odyssey

In "Ithaka," the exhibition of her latest work, Los Angeles-based photographer Alexandra Hedison draws viewers into the temperate rain forest of the Pacific Northwest. Oversized prints (of five by six and a half feet) place trees immediately before you, and in their colors and range, from rain-fresh ferns to black-green moss, you experience the richness of the forest. But the power of the images comes—as the show's name suggests (Ithaka was Odysseus' home)—from their recording of the photographer's recent personal odyssey and her journey through Olympic National Forest in Washington State.

In an interview with curator, Amélie Sourget, a photographer and owner of New York's Point of View Gallery, Hedison reveals how the experience led her to perceive "the ultimate reality, the ultimate silence."

Sourget: How did the camera draw you into the forest?
Hedison: When I researched Olympic I saw this world built, layer upon layer, from growth and decay, and I knew I wanted to shoot large format, with a four-by-five camera, which is very cumbersome. It meant I had to search carefully for the trees I wanted portraits of before I could return to shoot them. So each day I walked farther and farther into this majestic yet terrifying world where trees grew out of trees, the rain never stopped, the sky was always gray, and I never knew when my foot would go straight through a rotting log.

Sourget: What was the turning point?
Hedison: One day I felt completely exhausted, and it was then that I realized that what seemed so overwhelming to me was the continuous life of the forest, the constant, rain-watered regeneration. My own life was the only finite presence—and I knew this was the fundamental story.

Sourget: How does "Ithaka" relate to your previous work?
Hedison: My last exhibition, "(Re)Building," showed demolished houses and their reconstruction, which I shot obsessively in 2005. Soon after, all my instincts led me to start photographing trees, and, though I didn't know it at the time, it was the strong architecture of the trees that was leading me to explore the forest.

When I needed a title for the *current* exhibition, I went back to a poem, "Ithaka," by C. P. Cavafy, that had encouraged me at the beginning. The poet wrote, "As you set out for Ithaka, pray that the road is a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery."

ITHAKA IS SPONSORED BY
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Currently in London at Shoreditch Town Hall through October 17th, the exhibition travels to New York's Gallery 28, 608 West 28th Street, from October 29th–November 8th.

For more information, go to www.hedison.com.

UNITED PALACE
4140 Broadway, at 175th St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 8-10: The pop alchemist **Beck.** With the clever youngsters in **MGMT.**

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Oct. 11: **Against Me!** Before the earnest singer Tom Gabel led this Florida band, he was an acoustic troubadour with a penchant for protest songs. He's kept that anger and, now riding the adrenalized rush of vintage punk rock, he's made Against Me! into one of the more inventive, politically charged, and exciting bands in the contemporary American punk community.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Oct. 11: **KT Sullivan** sings the enduring work of Jerome Kern.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Oct. 8-11: The great bassist and bandleader **Dave Holland** presents the latest version of his sextet, which sparks his new album, "Pass It On." Recent additions to the band include the veteran pianist **Mulgrew Miller** and the trumpeter **Alex Sipiagin.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Oct. 9-12: **Jerry Douglas** may be a featured soloist with Alison Krauss's neo-bluegrass band, Union Station, but his eclectic musical leanings and astonishing virtuosity on the dobro place him far outside the confines of any one genre.

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Nov. 1: The guitarist and singer **John Pizzarelli** and his wife, **Jessica Molaskey,** both have exceptional new albums out. His is "With a Song in My Heart," and hers is "A Kiss to Build a Dream On." Their convivial act has plenty of entertainment and first-class musicianship. On Mondays, the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the pianist and vocalist **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Oct. 7-12: The pianist **Renee Rosnes** draws on the support of the saxophonist **Steve Wilson,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** and the drummer **Lewis Nash.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Oct. 7-18: **Mary Cleere Haran.** The charming singer and raconteur's show "Mad for Manhattan" pays tribute to New York City with songs from Broadway shows and Hollywood musicals.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Oct. 8-12: The zealous saxophonist **Kenny Garrett** returns to the club where he recorded his new album, "Sketches of MD: Live at the Iridium." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Oct. 9 and Oct. 11: **Dianne Reeves,** like Cassandra Wilson, is an assured jazz singer who has made her peace with pop music. She's won four Grammy Awards, the latest for her contribution to the 2005 film "Good Night, and Good Luck."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Charles Mingus's widow, Sue Mingus, keeps the music of the master bassist alive with the Mingus Dynasty, the Mingus Orchestra, and the Mingus Big Band. They'll be here on Mondays, with rotating weekly appearances. To settle in (they were in residence at Iridium in recent years), the groups are spending a few days at a time onstage. Last week belonged to the Mingus Dynasty. On Oct. 8-9, the **Mingus Orchestra,** which focusses on his compositions, takes over. Oct. 10-12: The **Mingus Big Band** is in the house. Oct. 13: Mingus Mondays get rolling in earnest with the **Mingus Dynasty.**

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—The popular "Salsa Meets Jazz" programs were a highlight of the Village Gate, the legendary club on Bleecker Street where this club now stands. The tradition has been revived by the owners of (Le) Poisson Rouge: the **Bobby Sanabria Big Band,** joined by the trumpeter **Jon Faddis** and the master *conguero* **Candido,** takes the stage on Oct. 13.

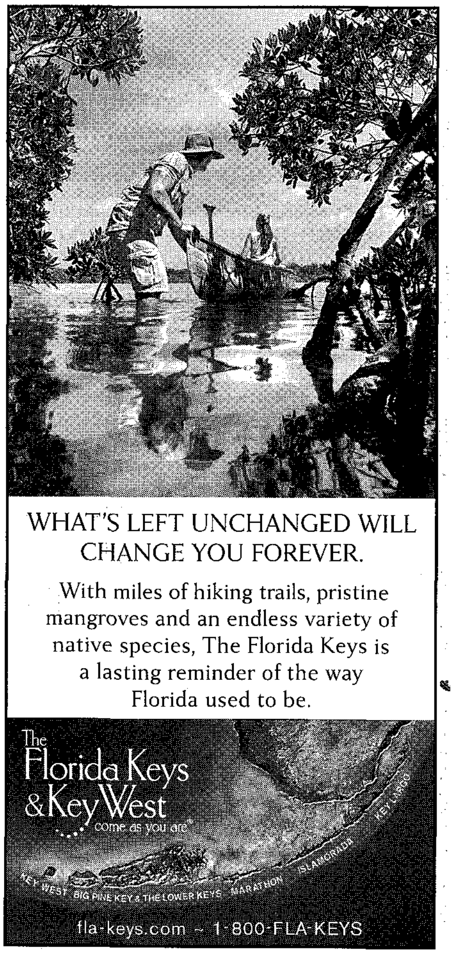
SMALLS
183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—Oct. 8: Accompanying himself on the bass while singing originals like "It's Impossible to Sing and Play the Bass," **Jay Leonhart** proves that wit and chops are all that an entertainer really needs. The early sets on Thursdays are reserved for the pianist **Ehud Asherie,** a master of swing and stride, who always invites a guest for off-the-cuff duets. The saxophonist **Harry Allen** sits in on Oct. 9.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 7-12 and Oct. 14-19: The **Bill Charlap** trio. Working in spruce synchronicity with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington,** the pianist Charlap displays the poise and taste—and, increasingly, the depth—of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Giorgio Morandi, 1890-1964."** The first-ever American retrospective of the Italian modern master is the sleeper hit of the season. Morandi's still-lifes, each an adventure, are unbeatably radical meditations on what can and can't happen when three dimensions are transposed into two. They provide an immersion in mysteries of painting both so timeless and so immediate that it feels like a fresh start. Through Dec. 14. ♦ **"Landscapes Clear and Radiant: The Art of Wang Hui (1632-1717)."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Royal Porcelain from the Twinight Collection: 1800-1850."** Through April 19. ♦ **"Jeff Koons on the Roof."** Through Oct. 26. ♦ **"Rhythms of Modern Life: British Prints, 1914-1939."** The British don't get much credit for their contributions to early-twentieth-century art, but two are highlighted here: the Vorticism movement and the invention of the linocut. Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's gorgeous, dynamic black-and-white print "Wrestlers" (circa 1914) and Edward Wadsworth's blocky, reductive woodcut "Yorkshire Village" (1914) reveal Vorticism's roots in Cubism and Futurism. The linocut was championed later, by the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, founded in 1925. Claude Flight, who pioneered the technique, is represented by prints so deft they could pass for watercolors. Sybil Andrews's linoleum blocks demonstrate the technique; Cyril E. Power's "Whence and Whither?," in which people cascade into the London Tube, puts an English twist on Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase." Through Dec. 7. ♦ **"New York, N. Why?: Photographs by Rudy Burckhardt, 1937-1940."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End."** Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night."** Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling."** Through Oct. 20. ♦ **"Projects 88: Lucy McKenzie."** It doesn't get more meta than this: the Scottish artist McKenzie hired her own interior-decoration company, Atelier, to create her installation at MOMA. The show is a hodgepodge of styles from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most notably Gothic Revival and Art Nouveau. The influence of Dada, Pop, and punk is evident in such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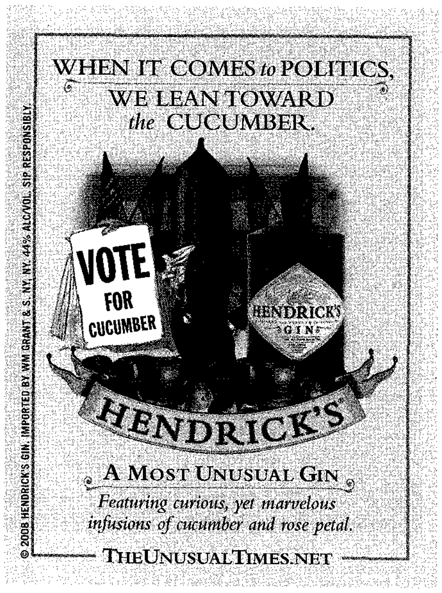
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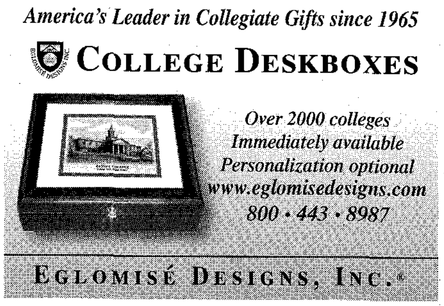
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irreverent gestures as a framed image partially obscured by a curtain and a print that looks as if it's been defaced with red paint. If there's an unacknowledged ghost in the room, it's that of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the great Arts and Crafts practitioner, whose own mashups of art, architecture, and design are both echoed and updated here. Through Dec. 1. ♦ **"Kirchner and the Berlin Street."** Through Nov. 10. ♦ **"New Photography 2008."** MOMA's annual showcase of significant recent work dwindles to only two entries this year—one conceptual, one "concerned"—with schizophrenic results. Josephine Meckseper, a German-born artist now based in New York, is best known for her display-case assemblages of cheap consumer products and magazine advertisements. Three of them are here, and they're subversive and irresistible in a way that Meckseper's huge "fashion" photographs and appropriated clothing-catalogue spreads can only aspire to be. Mikhael Subotzky, from South Africa, is an engaged documentarian in the classic mold who has done his best work inside his country's prisons. His large, engrossing color images of the troubled community that surrounds one of them are set alongside shots of the prison's interiors, suggesting that, for black South Africans, freedom can be more perilous than captivity. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Catherine Opie: American Photographer."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"Paul McCarthy: Central Symmetrical Rotation Movement Three Installations, Two Films."** Through Oct. 12. ♦ **"Progress,"** an exhibition drawn from the museum's collection, opens with works by such utopian-minded modernists as Lászlo Moholy-Nagy, Frederick Kiesler, and Naum Gabo, as well as an epic red canvas by Barnett Newman, optimistically titled "Day One." But ideals of progress take a dive in the bleak postindustrial landscapes portrayed in a pair of Ed Ruscha paintings and in figurines of nude sunbathers by Robert Graham. By the time viewers reach Paul Sietsema's doll-house-size model of Clement Greenberg's living room, tastefully appointed with replicas of paintings by artists whom the critic championed—Newman, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski—the notion of the advancement of humanity through art looks suspect. Through Nov. 30. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Gilbert & George."** Through Jan. 11. ♦ **"Jesper Just: Romantic Delusions."** Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"The Horse."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Lizards and Snakes: Alive!"** Through Jan. 5. **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Opens Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Art and China's Revolution."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**"Street Art, Street Life: From the 1950s to Now."** Through Jan. 25. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Wall Stories: Children's Wallpaper and Books."** Through April 5. ♦ **"Solos: Tulou/Affordable Housing for China."** Through April 5. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Susan Meiselas: In History."** Through Jan. 4 . ♦ **"America and the Tintype."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Cornell Capa: Concerned Photographer."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Living with the Dead: W. Eugene Smith and World War II."** Through Jan. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World."** Through Jan. 4. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Liszt in Paris: Enduring Encounters."** Through Nov. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
2 Columbus Circle (212-299-7777)—**"Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary."** Through Feb. 15. ♦ **"Elegant Armor: The Art of Jewelry."** Through May 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

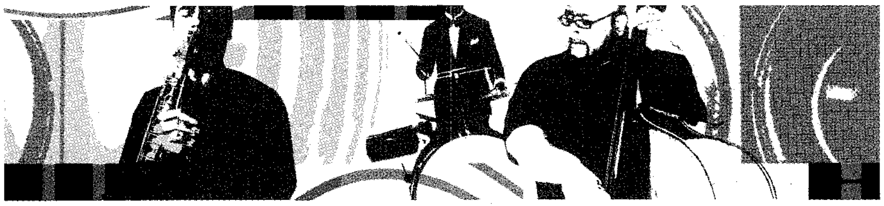
NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"George Tooker: A Retrospective."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"The Unknown Blakelock."** Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Alfred Kubin: Drawings, 1897-1909."** Dubbed the "Austrian Goya," Kubin (1877-1959) was a contemporary of Klimt and Freud, was praised by Kandinsky and Kafka, and paid the bills by illustrating Poe and Dostoyevsky. His delicate pen-and-ink drawings vivify nightmares—a rocking-horse guillotine slices up little men, a tiger-faced snake slithers through a wasteland, maidens are molested by an ape and a giant squid. Such dark visions reached their apogee in Kubin's illustrated novel "The Other Side," published in 1909, which chronicles the fall of the fantastical city of Perle and its cruel but beautiful leader, Patera. Letters and photographs—including one of the artist attired in nothing but a top hat and a fig leaf—round out the show. Through Jan. 26. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton."** Opens Oct. 8. ♦ **"Museum as Hub: Six Degrees."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Drawn by New York: Six Centuries of Watercolors and Drawings."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—**"The Dragon's Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan."** Tucked between Tibet and India at the foot of the Himalayas, the Buddhist nation of Bhutan was never colonized. Perhaps this is why, in lieu of focussing on its gross national product, it boasts a policy of "gross national happiness." On view here are relics of this attractive ethos, many of which have never before travelled abroad. An eighteenth-century Vajrakila dagger, for transfixing demons, and a statue of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651), who unified Bhutan, are among the treasures. But most enchanting are videos of Cham ritual dances performed by masked tantric celebrants, who adhere to the teaching that "to dance is to taste the mind." Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"Red, Black, and Gold."** Through Oct. 13. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 5, Wednesdays, 11 to 7, Fridays, 11 to 10, and weekends, 11 to 6.)


JOHN RITTER

JAZZ NOTES
TONY AWARD

From 1974 to 1980, the immensely assured multi-instrumentalist and composer Anthony Braxton was given virtual carte blanche at Clive Davis's Arista Records—an unlikely union of artist and corporation. Braxton was nothing if not rigorously intellectual and formally obsessed—a sonic omnivore influenced by artists as seemingly irreconcilable as Paul Desmond, Eric Dolphy, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. And let's not forget his penchant for labelling pieces with diagrams rather than with titles. What Davis thought of all this is difficult to imagine.

With Arista's pockets open—and, in those days, major labels had deep pockets—Braxton went for broke, cramming a healthy career's worth of ambitious and uncompromising music into less than a decade of activity, all of it now available on a new eight-CD set, **"The Complete Arista Recordings of Anthony Braxton"** (Mosaic Records). While some pieces in the set consciously turn their back on the jazz tradition (such as the epic work that requires four massed orchestras, and the collaborations between the avant-garde pianists Frederic Rzewski and Ursula Oppens which Braxton, solely in the role of composer, sits out), it's bracing to hear how flat-out hard other pieces swing, albeit in the skittish, hyperactive manner that Braxton made his own.

Working with such significant post-bop players as the trombonist George Lewis and the trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, and urged on by the fiercely interactive team of the bassist Dave Holland and the drummer Barry Altschul, Braxton displays an awesome command of his primary instruments, alto saxophone and clarinet, and brings a wealth of imagination to the flute and the other saxophones, including the diminutive sopranino and the bulbous contrabass. Among the set's delights are a duet session with the pianist Muhal Richard Abrams that finds room for Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," an inviting solo saxophone recital that mingles Braxton originals with jazz standards including Coltrane's "Giant Steps," and a visionary big-band project that, in a spirited jazz march, channels John Philip Sousa.

—*Steve Futterman*

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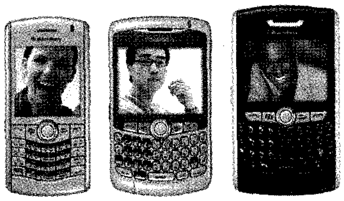

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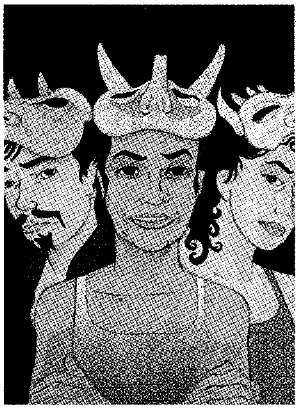
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SECOND AS FARCE

The New Museum curator Eungie Joo has a nose for talent—particularly for performers who are more likely to comment on the "legitimate" theatre than to attend it. Just recently, she reintroduced New York audiences to My Barbarian,



a performance collective based in Los Angeles. Founded in 2000 by Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade, this group of adorable whippersnappers makes work about showing off, wherein music—folk and funk, sung in three-part harmony—is interspersed with ironic but loving examinations of established playwrights. In last year's "Post-Living Ante-Action Theatre (PoLAAT): Post-Paradise, Sorry Again," the troupe took on the legacy of Fassbinder's Munich-based Action Theatre. Viewing that astringent work from the distance of forty years, Gaines, Gordon, and Segade show us—now in a film of the event, currently on display in the museum's exhibit "Museum as Hub: Six Degrees"—an element that is so often missing in today's avant-garde: an atmosphere of play.

—*Hilton Als*

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"We Burn, We Shiver."** Through Nov. 30. ♦ **"Degrees of Remove: Landscape and Affect."** Through Nov. 30. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Kehinde Wiley—The World Stage: Africa, Lagos ~ Dakar."** Through Oct. 26. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

JOHN ALTOON
Altoon (1925-69) was an Angeleno whose boisterous work synthesized Pop and Abstract Expressionism at the same time that it lampooned them. Cartoons were at the heart of Altoon's aesthetic, but he never gained enough distance from them for most viewers' comfort. The works on paper here showcase grotesque and sexualized comic vignettes à la Carroll Dunham; two canvases in which goofy shapes hover against drippy backgrounds presage the work of Elizabeth Murray. Altoon, it turns out, was ahead of his time, legitimatizing the marriage of cartoon imagery and gestural abstraction which has become a genre unto itself. Through Oct. 25. (Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-752-2929.)

CHEN JIAGANG
All the big, glossy color photographs in this Chinese artist's show were taken in the grim factory towns built in China's interior during the extensive relocations of the nineteen-sixties. Now largely abandoned, these Third Front sites are industrial wastelands, desolate and haunted. Chen fogs the almost colorless landscapes with swirling white smoke and places watchful, pretty young women here and there, like sentinels or fashion models. Chen intends for his images, with their echoes of the Maoist past, to be read like fables. Only a few truly resonate, however; most of them look like sets for music videos—stagy, portentous, and overblown. Through Oct. 18. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-750-7070.)

MARIA ELENA GONZÁLEZ
How many ways can you imagine a house? González takes the iconic form—a triangle atop a square—and casts it in bronze, resin, and aluminum, carves it in wood, suspends it upside down, and perches it on a hulking pedestal or a steeply graded slope. The lesson, of course, is that even when home is reduced to a strictly formal element, disconnected from time and place, it remains symbolically loaded. Knowing that González is a Cuban exile and that much of her earlier work referred to her personal history of dislocation reinforces the point. Through Nov. 1. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

WILLIAM POPE.L
Pope.L lines the gallery with more than a hundred small drawings made in transit since 2003—on airplane napkins, newspaper photographs, hotel stationery, a Howard Johnson's shoe mitt, and so on. The images tend toward the humorously sexual, with plenty of bespectacled worms, volcanoes, and explosions. He titled them "Failure Drawings," but failure overstates the situation; "Pope.L lite" is more like it. A few larger works—including "Coffin (Flag Box)," a padlocked wooden box resting on a book labelled "The Birth of a Nation" and emitting unhappy sounds of scratching, dragging, and bumping—reveal a more complex and rewarding side to the artist's wit. Through Oct. 24. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave. 212-744-7400.)

BRUCE WRIGHTON
It may be overstating the case to compare him to Walker Evans, William Eggleston, or Diane Arbus, but Wrighton, who died in 1988, at the age of thirty-eight, is a real discovery. The color portraits, scruffy interiors, and small-town streetscapes here were made toward the end of his life, in and around his home base of Binghamton, New York. The work is unpretentious but not quite artless, the portraits unvaryingly frontal and about as flattering as mug shots. Whether his subject is an anxious girl in a "Love" T-shirt or a gangly parking attendant, Wrighton pins them down with a rude descriptiveness that's both disturbing and oddly thrilling. Through Oct. 25. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

Short List

FISCHLI & WEISS: Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through Oct. 18. **MARY HEILMANN:** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Oct. 25. **JOSEF KOUDELKA / JUDITH JOY ROSS:** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999. Through Oct. 11. **JANET MALCOLM:** Bookstein, 37 W. 57th St. 212-750-0949. Through Oct. 11. **GIUSEPPE PENONE:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Oct. 11. **"UNTITLED (VICARIOUS): PHOTOGRAPHING THE CONSTRUCTED OBJECT":** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St. 212-744-2313. Through Nov. 1.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DOUG AITKEN
Inaugurating the gallery's Twenty-first Street space are three large video projections of animals—a buffalo, an osprey, some rabbits—set loose in motel rooms. A beaver splashes in a bathtub, a cougar wrestles with bedding, a deer paws through the minibar. On Twenty-second Street, a cylindrical room—it looks like a pod in a spaceship—is lined with thirty abstract watercolors that suggest, in their blue-gray palette, futuristic Sheelers, with prismatic hints of streets, overpasses, and buildings. A light box shaped like the word "STAR" glitters with a photograph of nighttime Los Angeles. To call Aitken's style slick would be an understatement, but themes of rootlessness and displacement lend his work a rough edge. Through Nov. 1. (303 Gallery, 547 W. 21st St.; 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

STEPHEN ANTONAKOS
Inspired by the light in his native Greece (and also, undoubtedly, by developments in the New York art world), Antonakos adopted neon in the early sixties and never looked back. The models, works on paper, and sculptures here serve as a warmup to the concurrent fifty-year retrospective at Pennsylvania's Allentown Arts Center (on view through January). The works here demonstrate Antonakos's crisp and bright aesthetic, which is comparable to that of his contemporaries Dan Flavin and James Turrell. One of Antonakos's most affecting innovations was to affix white panels to neon tubing, creating a geometric plane that appears to hover before a softly glowing wall. Through Oct. 25. (Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 212-206-6872; Krut, 526 W. 26th St. 212-255-3094. Through Nov. 15.)

LOUISE BOURGEOIS
This coda to the artist's recent retrospective at the Guggenheim presents new sculptures and works on paper. Articles of discarded clothing have been cast in bronze and painted a ghostly grayish white. Etchings worked in dripping red gouache and watercolor look like evidence from a domestic-crime scene. Together, these objects continue a career-long narrative centering on family, memory, and loss, leavened with humor. A bronze fleece pullover conveys both the pathos of the castoff and the absurdity of the talisman—like a filthy, once cherished security blanket reëncountered in adulthood. Through Nov. 1. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

CECILY BROWN
Brown's oil-on-linen paintings can be a bit like Rorschach tests that reveal you to have a dirty mind. Take the "Skulldiver" trio: you might see them as gorgeous abstractions—wild and lush, teeming with color and action—before noticing the wristwatch on an arm that leads to a torso and then to an unmentionable act. There's more to Brown's work than covert pornographic imagery, though. Her paintings thrill in their balance of precision and chaos. Through Oct. 25. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

MICHAEL WANDELMAIER

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JERONIMO ELESPE
Very small oils on aluminum panels by a young Spanish painter astonish. Elespe is a find. Landscapes, interiors, portraits, and abstract nocturnes—all painted from memory—deploy layered, tiny, sensitive strokes to peculiarly monumental effect. A brooding and delicate way with grays evokes the austere, magical gravitas of Spanish classical painting—by Velázquez, even. Elespe's portraits are especially cherishable. Self-possessed, erotically wise personages materialize from the wall, as if fresh from an indefinite past, to have a clear-eyed look around. You will want them to like you. Through Oct. 11. (Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563.)

MATTHEW DAY JACKSON
Jackson's ambitious first show at the gallery cites a head-spinning number of sources, from Buckminster Fuller to Albert Bierstadt. An astronaut's suit pinned to the wall by a board nods to Charles Ray. Another sculpture remakes Brancusi's "Bird in Space" in black, with glittering, celestial specks of mother-of-pearl. Huge panels merge references to Goya and sixties American craft, enlarging scenes from "Disasters of War" and embellishing them with yarn. A hulking, charred-wood re-creation of a *Time* cover about the Jonestown massacre is a powerful comment on the representation of death and the failure of utopia. But remove quotation from Jackson's equation and you take the wind out of his sails. A related show of drawings is on view at Klagsbrun. Through Nov. 8. (Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055.)

JOSEF KOUDELKA
The photographs that Koudelka took during the August, 1968, week in which Soviet-led troops invaded Prague still strike sparks. Koudelka brought the righteous fury of a resistance fighter to a subject that never gets old: popular opposition to totalitarian repression. The bulk of the work in this two-gallery show is installed, unframed, at Aperture, where the walls have been painted black for maximum impact; a smaller group of vintage and new prints is at Pace/MacGill. A number of these pictures were published a year after the invasion but were attributed to an anonymous Czech photographer. Many more have never been shown before. All the images have the jolting immediacy of eyewitness news. Koudelka's fearlessness was clearly epidemic; his pictures are proof that Prague was occupied but never cowed, never conquered. Through Oct. 30. (Aperture Foundation, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555; Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

JOSHUA LUTZ
Lutz has been photographing in the Jersey Meadowlands for ten years, so this group of sixteen large color prints is the product of a hard-won and not entirely affectionate familiarity with those thirty-two square miles of polluted wetlands. Like many contemporary photo-essayists (notably Alec Soth), Lutz begins with the landscape but includes portraits and still-lifes that open up a variety of narratives. The former wilderness is a dumping ground—there's a fuselage, and what looks like a dead body but is only a mannequin, face down in a stream. Yet Lutz can still bask in the late-afternoon light on a weed-covered landfill. Through Oct. 18. (ClampArt, 521-531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

VIK MUNIZ
Muniz, whose work usually straddles photography and drawing, turns to sculpture in the trompe-l'oeil vein in this exhibition of what appear to be nine framed paintings set on blocks and turned to the wall. Each piece painstakingly reproduces the back of a canonical work—Picasso's "Demoiselles d'Avignon," van Gogh's "The Starry Night," Hopper's "Nighthawks"—with every hook, supporting brace, and yellowing museum label copied from the original. A larger group of smaller pieces in the back room performs a similar feat of mimicry, this time of the stamped and collaged backs of famous news photographs. Muniz has long urged his viewers to reëxperience familiar images through his art; here, by denying us access, he brings the images vividly to mind. Through Oct. 11. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

JEAN-LUC MYLAYNE
There's something more than a little nutty about the French artist's obsessive approach to photographing birds, but his results are often extraordinary. His large-scale color pictures from Texas are among the first he's made in the United States, and they involved weeks of patient preparation. Because many of these images were made with lenses that produce peculiar blurs and reflections, even the most straightforward shots of birds perched on twigs or foraging on the ground look hallucinatory. That confusion undermines some of the new photographs, but others vibrate with the intensity of a love affair consummated. Through Oct. 18. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

HANS SILVESTER
Like Leni Riefenstahl's controversial pictures of the Nuba, Silvester's photographs of men and women from two nomadic tribes in southern Ethiopia treat their subjects primarily as aesthetic objects. But, in part, that's how the tribal people present themselves: they use their naked bodies as canvases for extraordinary freestyle designs finger-painted with natural pigments. One reclining figure is covered in white and ochre daisies, another with a galaxy of stars, but most of the largely headless torsos documented here are decorated with spontaneous abstractions. Silvester's work is straightforward and understated—a record of his subjects' protean, ephemeral creativity. Through Oct. 11. (Marlborough, 545 W. 25th St. 212-463-8634.)

MICHAEL THOMPSON
The fact that Thompson, whose fashion photographs appear regularly in *W* and *Allure*, was an assistant to Irving Penn will come as no surprise. Thompson shares his mentor's cool precision and his taste for high-impact imagery, evidenced here in a group of photographs that have the punch and scale of posters. Women are the frequent subjects of these pictures, but only rarely do we see their faces. Like the several butterflies portrayed here, the models are props—perfect bodies to be painted, masked, and tightly cropped. The image of a single female finger coated in red-orange powder and looming like the Empire State Building may not be empowering, but it is drop-dead iconic. Through Oct. 25. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006.)

SUE WILLIAMS
The choleric feminist turned elegant abstractionist recycles a motif of several years ago—paintings that are allover orgies of cartooned body parts, but with intestinal squiggles and gory splatter in place of excited protuberances and orifices. It's all about American military atrocities and political evil, the artist avers. (A teeming abstraction in Day-Glo pink and orange conveys, it says here, that there's no meaningful difference between Republicans and Democrats.) The visual results are smashingly lovely. Grotesquerie at a uniform pitch neutralizes itself. Williams's mastery of touch and scale, in seductive color, prevails. The works get better—zestier and more electrically decorative—the longer you look. Whatever Williams thinks she's doing is fine, just so she keeps doing it. Through Oct. 25. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

AMY WILSON
"They look like greeting cards," a visitor was heard to say at Wilson's show, referring to her willfully naïve drawings of girls gazing out windows, having pillow fights, and frolicking in forests. And they do, rather, these watercolors adorned with tiny collaged stars and raindrops. But read the texts pencilled inside thought bubbles: the waifs discuss Frida Kahlo, Joseph Beuys, and John Cage, the function of memory, the origins of the universe, and the moral implications of state-sanctioned torture. Good luck finding that on a Hallmark. Through Oct. 18. (Bravin Lee, 526 W. 26th St. 212-462-4404.)

Short List

RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER: Nolan, 527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190. Through Dec. 6. **EMILY EVELETH:** Danese, 335 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227. Through Oct. 11. **DAVID HARRISON:** Reich, 537A W. 23rd St. 212-924-4949. Through Oct. 18. **ROBERT INDIANA:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St.

TABLES FOR TWO
JAMES

HONORE BROWN

605 Carlton Ave., at St. Marks Ave., Brooklyn (718-942-4255)—Deep in the brownstones of Prospect Heights, away from the cafés of Flatbush and Vanderbilt Avenues, with their homelier crowds and everyday fare, James glows like a well-kept campfire, luring diners to an otherwise quiet residential block. For several years, this historic Brooklyn neighborhood has been enduring a growth spurt, and the locals' eager acceptance of James, coupled with what is essentially a no-reservation policy, has led to hour-long waits. Since James has little room to spare, would-be diners are sometimes forced curbside, left to watch the action within. Once you're seated, the place is dreamlike: amber beams from an outré Lucite chandelier are reflected in opposite mirrors, and James's affectations—the grand palms at the end of the bar; the deliberately distressed wall; the copious votive candles—evoke Rick's Café Américain, via Klimt's "The Kiss."

Too many servers conflate good with frequently ordered, but at James recently a diner's request for guidance induced a waitress to recite nearly the whole menu—"seasonal-American . . . with 'old-world European influences,' " as the Web site has it. She was right, beginning with a crab-cake starter that's capped, in her words, with "super-fresh and really yummy micro-greens." (The co-owners, Bryan Calvert, who cooks, and his wife, Deborah Williamson, who mingles, live above the restaurant, where they tend a six-hundred-square-foot herb garden.) Seared scallops float in a watercress purée studded with sweet roasted corn, while flaxen prawns are served with a sunchoke purée and garlic confit. An excellent fillet of brook trout is first sautéed, then covered with hazelnuts and chives, folded in half, tied with a string of budding chive, and balanced with a side of fennel and oranges—evidence of James's vast but not vulgar aspirations. A tender loin of lamb, encrusted with pine nuts and rosemary, and served with a buttery three-bean stew, struck just the right notes of heavy and light. The desserts, though, especially the warm ricotta beignets, win out. On a recent evening, the finest compliment, aside from the empty plates and the vows to return, came from a couple who live just down the block. Thinking of their postprandial chores, one of the two leaned in to say, "We'll never let our dog go pee on their planters." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Entrées $14-$29.)

—*Mike Peed*

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212-563-4474. Through Nov. 1. **MATTHEW DAY JACKSON:** Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335. Through Oct. 18. **SEAN LANDERS:** Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Opens Oct. 10. **NALINI MALANI:** Arario, 521 W. 25th St. 212-206-2760. Through Oct. 25. **MATTHEW MONAHAN:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Opens Oct. 10. **ALIX PEARLSTEIN:** The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Through Oct. 18. **MARTHA ROSLER:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through Oct. 11. **TONY SMITH:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through Oct. 25. **"SILVERSTEIN ANNUAL":** Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through Oct. 11.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA
The show comprises some two hundred drawings, commissioned by Tiravanija and executed by young Thai artists (some his former students), based on photographs of political demonstrations originally published in the *International Herald Tribune*. Taken out of context, however, the images and messages can stop making sense. Who, for example, is the target of the poster demanding "Stop the maniac before he completely wacks out"? And in what country was the sign reading "Stop whoring our national asset" waved? Still, certain sentiments are repeated often enough that, by the third time you encounter the simple words "No War," you feel the power of Tiravanija's paean to people who take their convictions to the streets. Through Nov. 6. (Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.)

"WENDINGEN"
Wendingen ("upheavals," in Dutch) was an experimental arts journal founded in 1918 and published until 1932. Each issue was dedicated to a single artist or theme, and the editors, at the Amsterdam-based society Architectura et Amicitia, delved with equal interest into architecture, design, craft, and the fine and performing arts. El Lissitzky, Josef Hoffman, Gustav Klimt, and Erich Mendelsohn were all featured in its pages, and Frank Lloyd Wright enjoyed a seven-issue series. The publication was square, roughly the size of a record-album sleeve, and the covers were designed by artists, many of them Dutch. Among the many highlights here is the February, 1918, issue, which juxtaposes a totem pole from the Pacific Northwest with a silhouetted Sphinx. Through Nov. 1. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

Short List

EUNICE KIM: Canada, 55-59 Chrystie St. 212-925-4631. Through Oct. 19. **LEIGH LEDARE:** Rivington Arms, 4 E. 2nd St. 646-654-3213. Through Oct. 19. **STAN VANDERBEEK:** Guild & Greyshkul, 28 Wooster St. 212-625-9224. Through Oct. 18. **"USEFUL GESTURES / USELESS GESTURES":** Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through Oct. 19.

DANCE

BALLET HISPANICO
The company's two-week season at the Joyce is the last with its pioneering founder, Tina Ramirez, as artistic director. To cap off her estimable tenure of nearly forty years, she takes the stage for a small role in Graciela Daniele's "Stages." The first week also includes the première of Carlos Sierra Lopez's "Carmen" adaptation, "Destino Incierto," and former members of the Tito Puente Orchestra accompanying "Tito on Timbales." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 7-8 at 7:30, Oct. 9-10 at 8, Oct. 11 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 12 at 2 and 7:30. Through Oct. 19.)

OTHERSHORE
Brandi Norton and Sonja Kostich, two dance veterans with vastly different backgrounds, have formed a company of their own. For their début at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, they've commissioned three works, from Edwaard Liang (a former New York City Ballet dancer), Stacy Matthew Spence (formerly with Trisha Brown), and Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar (of Big Dance Theatre). (450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200. Oct. 9-11 at 8 and Oct. 12 at 3.)

DRE.DANCE
Taye Diggs and his less famous co-choreographer, Andrew Palermo, get into the election-season spirit with an evening-long political piece. "The People" imagines a party at which all factions are represented, from the religious right to the radical left. The saxophonist Rob Reddy and his band perform Reddy's original score. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Oct. 9-11 at 8.)

CAPACITOR
Not many dance troupes appear in the magazine *Nature*. This San Francisco-based outfit has developed a reputation for translating scientific ideas into striking theatre. "Biome," its latest project, was developed with tree scientists on location in the Monteverde Cloud Forest, in Costa Rica. Film footage from that excursion—wet, naked bodies crammed into a hollow trunk—complements the dancers, who are decked out in simian furs and fencing gear. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 9-11 at 8 and Oct. 12 at 3.)

KITT JOHNSON X-ACT
Danspace Project brings in the Danish choreographer to perform her solo "Rankefod" (the title refers to an ancient form of barnacle). With extraordinary control, Johnson evolves from a headless, armless creature, all back, into a woman of severe beauty. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Oct. 9-11 at 8:30.)

"REWIND"
"Rewind," the first theatrical program by the B-boys of Knucklehead Zoo, is an hour-long bid to attract a wider audience, combining old-school moves, a beatboxer, and a d.j. with state-of-the-art routines that borrow from acrobatics, capoeira, and anything else that will get a crowd cheering. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Oct. 10 at 7, Oct. 11 at 2 and 7, and Oct. 12 at noon and 5. Through Oct. 19.)

AMY CARON
In "Waves of Mu," the Salt Lake City-based performance artist explores the complex, cutting-edge science of "mirror neurons"—neurons that activate when, say, we grab something, but also when we see another person grab something—through a mixed format of video interviews and projections, interactive sports-viewing, mock-scientific lectures, and audience participation. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 10-11 and Oct. 14 at 7:30 and Oct. 12 at 5:30. Through Oct. 19.)

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
The venerable ballet troupe—the oldest professional ballet company in the country—is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary with a nationwide tour, showing off highlights from its ambitious New Works Festival. In the past two decades, the artistic director, Helgi Tomasson, has made it into a gleaming ensemble, with many bright talents in its roster (which now includes Sofiane Sylve, formerly of N.Y.C.B.) and a rich blend of the classic and the innovative in its repertoire, including a well-maintained dose of Balanchine ("Divertimento No. 15," "The Four Temperaments"), as well as a growing collection of Tomasson's own neoclassical ballets. Some highlights include Christopher Wheeldon's sensual new work "Within the Golden Hour," Mark Morris's playful and percussive "Joyride" (with fabulous futuristic costumes by Isaac Mizrahi), and, for fans of the Finnish choreographer Jorma Elo, "Double Evil," his latest quirky, propulsive ballet, set to a Philip Glass score. For the full program, visit www.nycitycenter.org. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Oct. 10-11 at 8, Oct. 12 at 3, and Oct. 14 at 7:30. Through Oct. 18.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
WHAT LOLA WANTS

GAMMA FILMS-FLORIDA FILMS/DR/TCD

The exacting and sumptuous Cinémathèque Française restoration of "Lola Montès," Max Ophüls's last film, from 1955 (opening at Film Forum on Oct. 10), recovers not just the movie's look but also its meaning. The romantic costume drama presents a great nineteenth-century femme fatale, a faux-Spanish danseuse and gold-digger whose lovers included Franz Liszt and King Ludwig of Bavaria. Yet Ophüls makes of her story something stunningly personal. He starts the movie where Lola (played by the thirty-five-year-old French sex symbol and scandal magnet Martine Carol) ends up: in an American circus, reënacting her adventures. Her passions burned out, her money gone, her earlier days of wildness recurring to her in flashbacks, she has become a celebrity, a precursor to a movie star. The movie is a colossal spectacle about colossal spectacles, and the extravagant palette, the cavernous sets, and the wide-screen images in which Ophüls entombs Lola (and Carol) contrast cruelly with the real-life pathos of the performers, whom the director's own magnificent artistry cannot help but exploit as well as celebrate.
—*Richard Brody*

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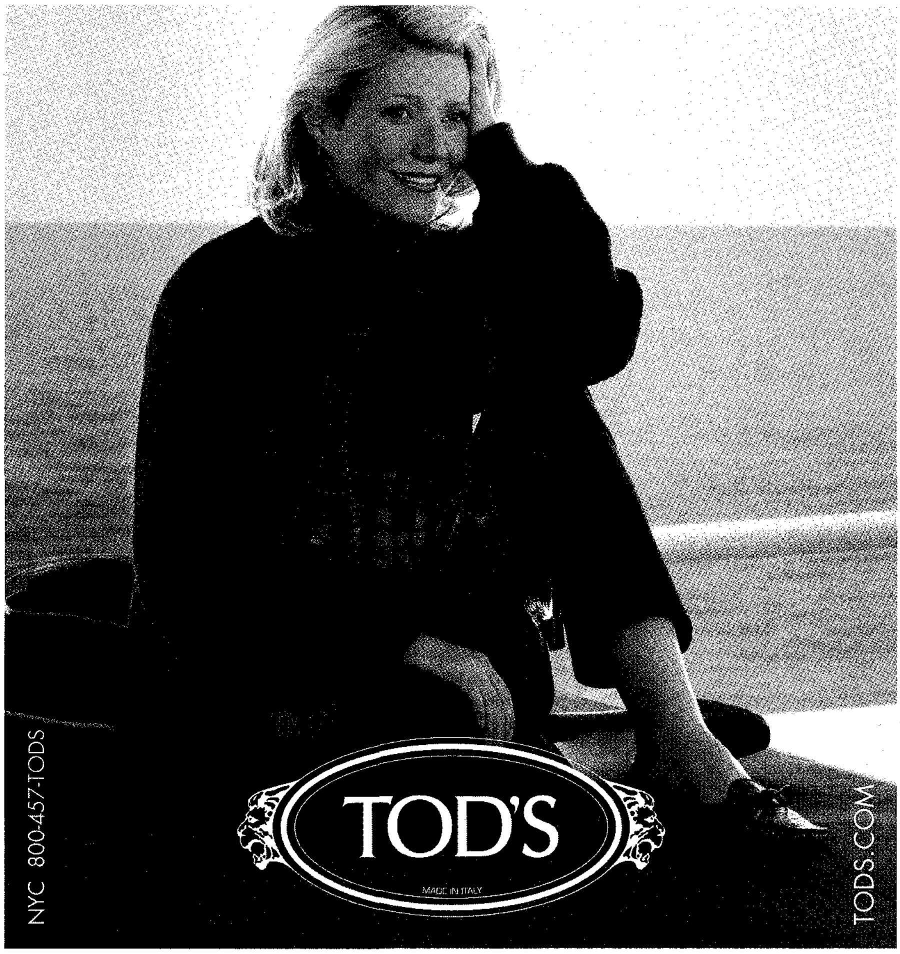

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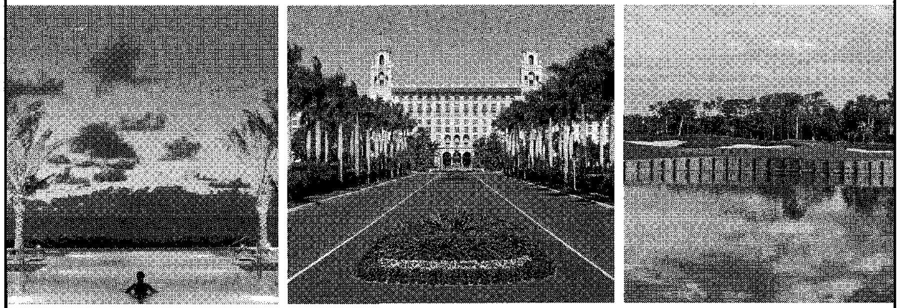

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ACCRORAP
Being French, this hip-hop ensemble has grown up on subsidies and received ample encouragement to experiment. The troupe has no trouble offering up head spins to café accordion music, body language from the Bronx mixed with French whimsy. "Little Stories.com," presented as part of the French Institute Alliance Française festival "I Kiffe NY: French Urban Cultures," is a sketchbook of a show that resists urban stereotypes, often with physical comedy that wouldn't be out of place in a silent movie. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-7171. Oct. 10-11 at 8.)

KATIE WORKUM DANCE THEATRE
Workum has the courage of her idiosyncrasies. The wide-ranging activities of the four central women in her new piece, "Carlisle," suggest all manner of creatures, not excluding poor dancers looking to share a taxi home to Brooklyn after the show. They sing that request in one of the quirky little songs, also by Workum, that tip the oddity into absurd humor. Supplemented by a chorus of Korean dancers, the appealing cast moves through some dull patches into unpredictably delightful terrain. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. Oct. 10 at 8:30, Oct. 11 at 3 and 8:30, and Oct. 12 at 3.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Last season's opening-night attraction was Mary Zimmerman's new production of **"Lucia di Lammermoor,"** whose combination of fantasy and verisimilitude delighted the daring but left traditionalists unmoved. Diana Damrau (who could definitely give 2007's Lucia, Natalie Dessay, a run for her money) takes the title role in this revival, joined by a fine roster that includes Piotr Beczala, Vladimir Stoyanov, and Ildar Abdrazakov; Marco Armiliato, the Met's reliable Italian hand, is on the podium. (Oct. 8 and Oct. 11 at 8.) ♦ Ponchielli's **"La Gioconda"** is at once a farewell to grand opera and a preview of the verismo style of the composer's students (such as Mascagni). Margherita Wallmann's production is very, very old, but if "Gioconda" is well cast—and this revival features such singers as Deborah Voigt, Olga Borodina, Ewa Podleś, and James Morris—the piece can be captivating. Christopher Wheeldon contributes delectable choreography to "The Dance of the Hours"; Daniele Callegari. (Oct. 9 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ Marthe Keller's production of **"Don Giovanni"** may be set in a big brick alley of a set, but it gives distinctive performers a clear slate on which to make their mark. Erwin Schrott, opera's latest chest-baring baritone, sings with dark, seductive tones as a cavalier Don G. The supporting cast is led by the stately mezzo-soprano Susan Graham and the tenor Matthew Polenzani, who is such a blue-chip Mozartean that he could give the conductor Louis Langrée (for whom the orchestra plays loudly) a lesson in style. Also with Krassimira Stoyanova, Ildebrando D'Arcangelo, Joshua Bloom, and Isabel Leonard, who makes an alluring Zerlina. (Oct. 10 and Oct. 14 at 8.) ♦ Karita Mattila's jaw-dropping performance in the title role of **"Salome"** in 2004 set New York on its ear, with her (very) brief nude scene adding to the excitement. Now she's back, singing as bravely as ever, though at times her voice sounds a bit worse for wear. Jürgen Flimm's production, at once lurid and mystical, returns as well, with Ildikó Komlósi, Kim Begley, Joseph Kaiser, and Juha Uusitalo (a fearsome John the Baptist) completing the cast; Patrick Summers finds the danger, if not the derangement, in Strauss's thrilling score. (Oct. 11 at 1.) ♦ In a striking example of the new Met's range, Peter Gelb presents the New York première of John Adams's **"Doctor Atomic,"** an opera that gives

a lyrical tone and a mythic dimension to the invention of the atomic bomb at Los Alamos at the end of the Second World War. Reviews of the San Francisco Opera's première production professed admiration for the music but critiqued the opera's somewhat static, oratorio-like pacing; Gelb has responded by commissioning an entirely new production, directed by Penny Woolcock, who made the acclaimed film version of another problematic Adams opera, "The Death of Klinghoffer." Two superb singers, Gerald Finley (a young house favorite) and Eric Owens (making his début), reprise their San Francisco roles of J. Robert Oppenheimer and his nemesis, General Leslie Groves; Sasha Cooke sings the role of Kitty Oppenheimer; Alan Gilbert, in his house début, conducts. (Oct. 13 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

DICAPO OPERA: "TURANDOT"
Puccini's grandest opera—think of the Met's production!—gets the small-is-beautiful treatment from New York's third professional company, which, given the near-absence of City Opera, will be more visible than ever this year. The Met veteran Anthony Laciura, in the role of the Emperor Altoum, joins a young cast conducted by Pacien Mazzagatti and directed by Michael Capasso. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438, ext. 10. Oct. 10 at 6:30 and Oct. 12 at 8. Through Oct. 18.)

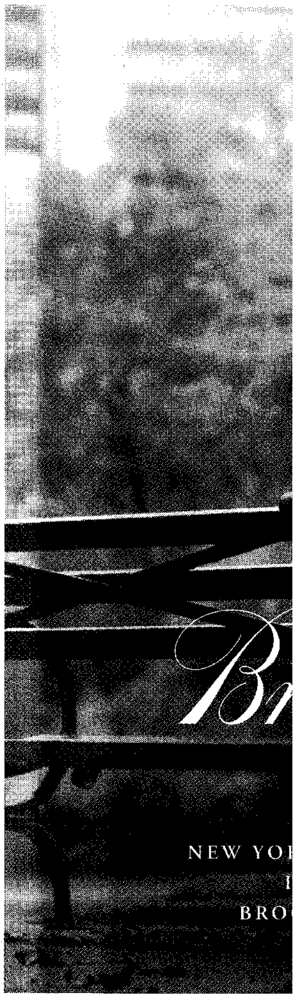
ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

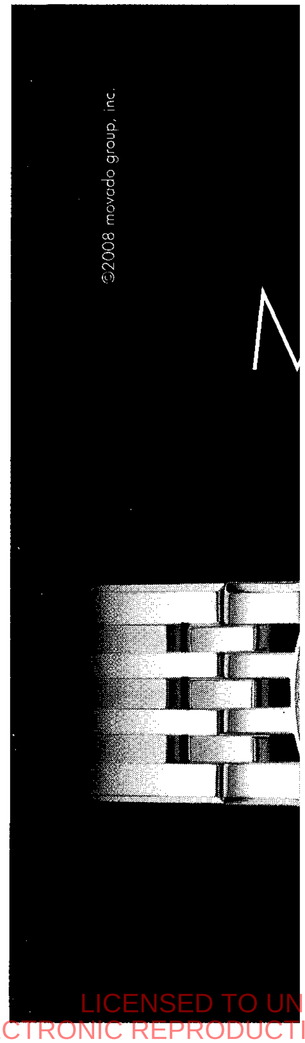
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Marin Alsop, the music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, returns to the Philharmonic's podium for a week of concerts centered on Dvořák's "New World" Symphony. Two are standard affairs, in which the symphony closes a program that begins with Bartók's Suite from "The Wooden Prince" and Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor (with the up-and-coming Polish pianist Rafal Blechacz). (Oct. 7 at 7:30 and Oct. 11 at 8.) ♦ Another mixes New York tradition and Hollywood glamour: a multimedia evening, produced by the critic Joseph Horowitz, in which Alec Baldwin will narrate the fascinating story of how the "New World" came to be premièred (by the New York Philharmonic) in 1893, with the bass Kevin Deas impersonating the composer. A full performance of the Dvořák symphony follows. (Oct. 10 at 8.) ♦ A Saturday-matinée program again features the "New World," preceded by a performance of the Piano Quintet by Dvořák's senior colleague Johannes Brahms (with the pianist Shai Wosner joining members of the orchestra). (Oct. 11 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

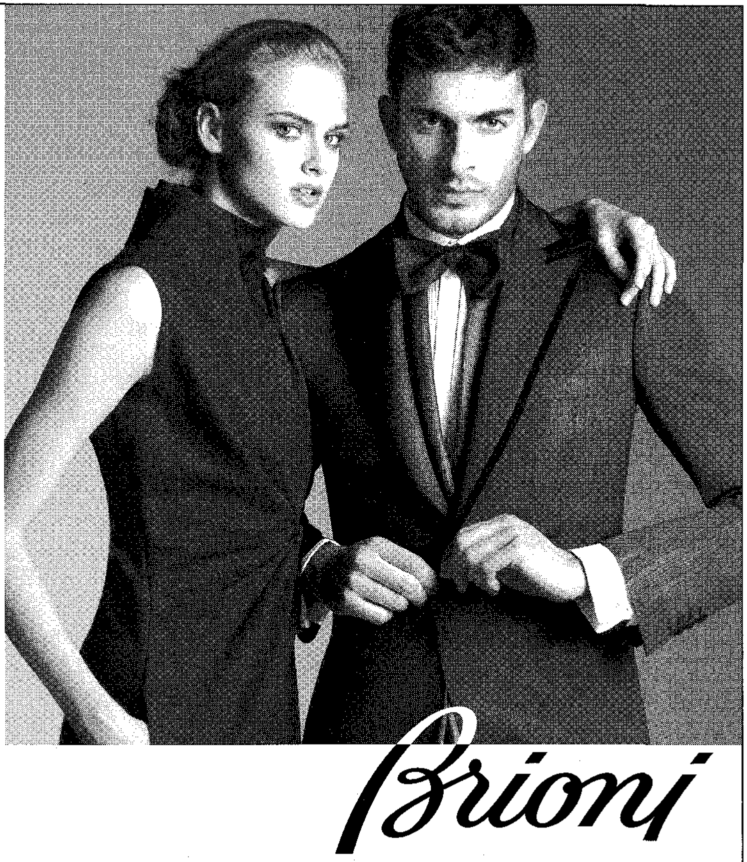
JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA
Two great Romantic symphonies—Schumann's No. 2 in C Major and Dvořák's No. 8 in G Major—comprise the orchestra's latest program, conducted by the venerable James DePreist. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School, 155 W. 65th St. Oct. 10 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

FLEXIBLE ORCHESTRA: "FLUTES PLUS!"
Daniel Goode's big avant-garde combo rotates as needed, with one section of the standard orchestra garnished with a sprinkling of other timbres. This concert, featuring a full department of eleven flutes (along with tuba, trumpet, harpsichord, and double bass), offers such rarities as "Angels and Devils," by the late, great experimentalist composer Henry Brant, along with works by Goode and Skip La Plante. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Oct. 10 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER AND CAMERATA SALZBURG
The commanding violinist brings the fine Austrian orchestra to Carnegie Hall, soloing in the three violin concertos by J. S. Bach (along with an arrangement of Tartini's "Devil's Trill" Sonata by the verismo composer Riccardo Zandonai). (212-247-7800. Oct. 13 at 8.)







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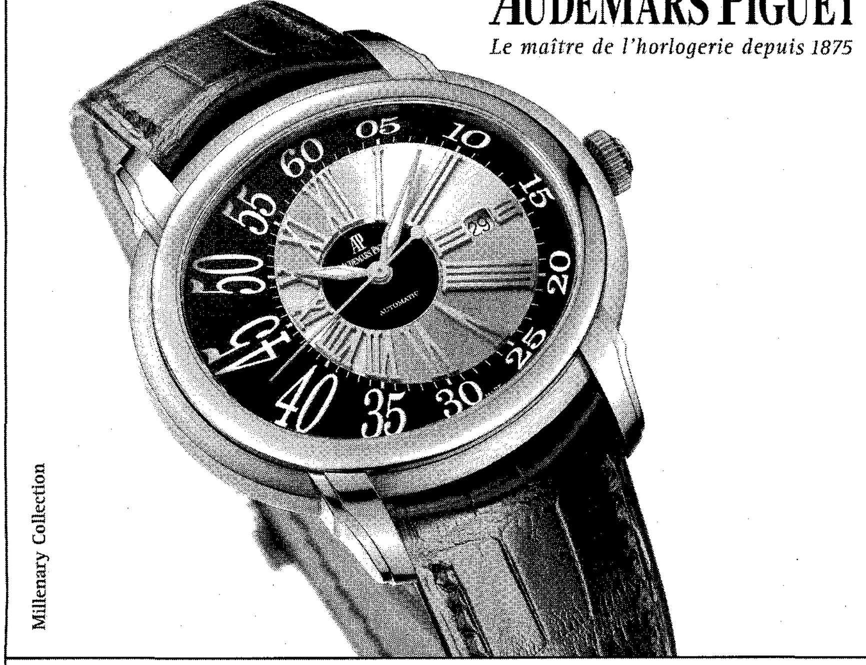

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RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "NEW MUSIC IN THE ROSE"
French music takes center stage in this, the second of four concerts devoted to composers from *le beau pays*. New and recent music by a selection of prominent Gallic composers (including Dutilleux's classic "Ainsi la Nuit," for string quartet, and the U.S. première of Bruno Mantovani's "L'Ère de Rien") will be performed by the pianist Alan Feinberg, the clarinettist Jose Franch-Ballester, and the Jupiter String Quartet, among others. (Rose Studio, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5788. Oct. 9 at 7:30.)

MENAHEM PRESSLER AND RICHARD STOLTZMAN
The Beaux Arts Trio is no more, but Pressler, its magisterial pianist, moves on. He joins his clarinettist friend for a concert at the Metropolitan Museum that features works by Berg (the Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano), Brahms (the Clarinet Sonata No. 1 in F Minor), Kurtág, and Schubert ("The Shepherd on the Rock," with the soprano Heidi Grant Murphy). (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. Oct. 10 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 10 at 8: The young New York composer David Shohl commandeers the barge's "Here and Now" series of concerts of American contemporary music with a program of his works, including two pieces for chamber symphony ("Flight" and "Flowers"), offered by his friends in the iO Quartet and the 85th Street Wind Quintet (along with the pianist Marc Peloquin). ♦ Oct. 11 at 8 and Oct. 12 at 4: Tradition returns via the violinist Mayumi Fujikawa, the cellist Richard Markson, and the pianist Gerald Robbins, offering piano trios by Tchaikovsky and Beethoven (the "Archduke," Op. 97). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MILLER THEATRE
Early music and high-modernist repertory—two favorites of the outgoing artistic director, George Steel—mix on the Miller schedule. Oct. 10 at 8: In "Bach on the Viols," a concert given at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the renowned British ensemble Fretwork offers an authentic-inauthentic program: a sequence of keyboard works by J. S. Bach arranged for a consort of viols, a grouping that was archaic by the time the composer reached his maturity. (Broadway at 156th St.) ♦ Oct. 11 at 8: The great Fred Sherry, the first-choice cellist among New York's most "uncompromising" composers, joins a passel of string-playing colleagues (including the violinists Jennifer Frautschi and Jesse Mills and the violist Paul Neubauer) to perform works by Stravinsky (the Concertino), Schoenberg (the rugged and rarely heard Quartet No. 3), Milton Babbitt, and Charles Wuorinen (the richly expressive String Sextet). (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St.) (212-854-7799.)

"EAR TO THE EARTH"
The Electronic Music Foundation has organized its third freewheeling festival celebrating New York's sonic environment, featuring concerts, installations, and "sound walks." One of the first events is the New York première of Francisco López's "Trilogy of the Americas"—which promises to be very loud—at a darkened Judson Church. (55 Washington Sq. S. Oct. 11 at 7:30. For more information and full schedule, see www.eartotheearth.org.)

YUNDI LI
The poetic but powerful young Chinese pianist comes to Carnegie Hall for a solo recital firmly based in classic repertoire—Chopin, Schumann, Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition"—but also offering contemporary works by the composer Jian-Zhong Wang (including "Rosy Clouds Chasing the Moon"). (212-247-7800. Oct. 11 at 8.)

HUGO WOLF QUARTET
The Frick Collection hosts a concert by the superb young Austrian ensemble, offering string quartets by Haydn (in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3), Webern, Schu-

mann (No. 3 in A Major), and its namesake (the "Italian Serenade"). (1 E. 70th St. 212-547-0715. Oct. 12 at 5.)

AXIOM: "A TRIBUTE TO LUCIANO BERIO"
Berio's music, at once engagingly lyrical and incisively modern, is the focus of the Juilliard new-music group's first concert of the season. In addition to three of the solo "Sequenzas," the program also features "Circles" and the pocket piano concerto "Points on the Curve to Find" (conducted by Jeffrey Milarsky). (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Oct. 13 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

"YALE IN NEW YORK: WIND SERENADES"
The Yale School of Music, increasing its profile in Gotham, begins a season of concerts with a program offered by its star wind faculty (including the oboist Stephen Taylor and the hornist William Purvis) which features not only classic works by Mozart, Dvořák, and Strauss but also a new piece by an alumnus, David Lang, the winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize for music. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 14 at 7:30.)

MOVIES OPENING

ASHES OF TIME REDUX
The director Wong Kar-Wai's reworking of his 1994 adaptation of a martial-arts novel, starring Leslie Cheung, Brigitte Lin, Tony Leung Chiu Wai, and Tony Leung Ka Fai. In Cantonese. Opening Oct. 10. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BODY OF LIES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 10. (In wide release.)

CITY OF EMBER
A fantasy, directed by Gil Kenan, about two teenagers who rescue an underground city that is running out of light. Starring Saoirse Ronan, Harry Treadaway, Bill Murray, Tim Robbins, and Mary Kay Place. Opening Oct. 10. (In wide release.)

THE EXPRESS
A bio-pic about Ernie Davis, the first black athlete to win the Heisman Trophy. Directed by Gary Fleder; starring Rob Brown, Nelsan Ellis, and Dennis Quaid. Opening Oct. 10. (In wide release.)

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 10. (In limited release.)

LA LÉON
Santiago Otheguy directed this drama, from Argentina, about a water-taxi driver's difficulty admitting his homosexual desires. In Spanish. Opening Oct. 10. (Cinema Village.)

NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 10. (IFC Center.)

QUARANTINE
A horror film, directed by John Erick Dowdle, about a television news team (Jennifer Carpenter and Steve Harris) who come in contact with victims of a deadly disease. Opening Oct. 10. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

APPALOOSA
A well-made, satisfying, traditionalist Western with some odd quirks and turns. Virgil Cole (Ed Harris) and his deputy, Everett Hitch (Viggo Mortensen), are guns for hire in the Old West—longtime partners who communicate mainly with glances, nods, a few gnomic words, and a deepening stillness that suddenly explodes into violence. In 1882, they enter Appaloosa, a New Mexico frontier town, and offer their services to people who are being terrorized by a rapacious landowner and gang leader (Jeremy Irons). The movie offers a fresh character in Allie French (Renée Zellweger), who seems, at first, the usual refined lady from the East. She latches on to Virgil, breaking up the chaste, straightback-mountain love affair of Virgil and Hitch, but she's

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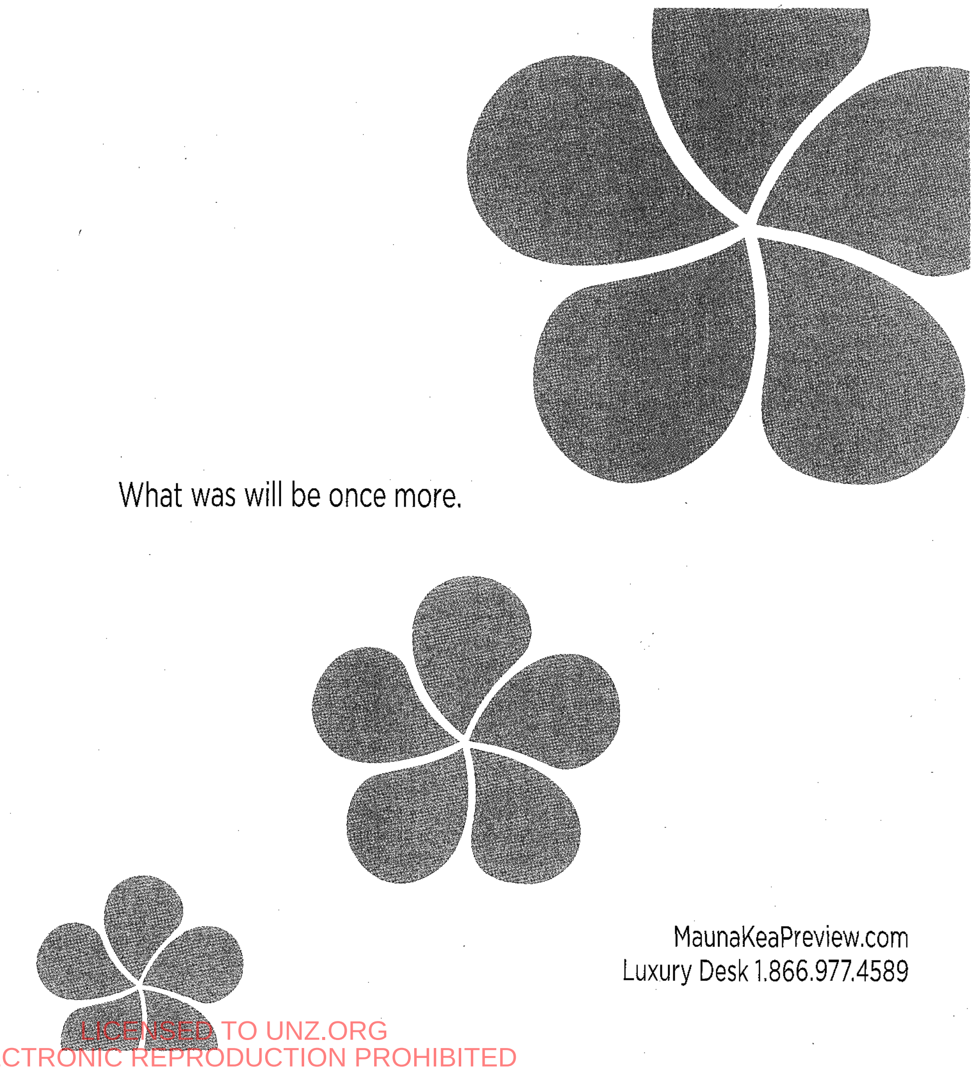

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not quite what either man expects—that is, she's neither a wife nor a whore but a little of both. Harris, who directed, revels in the wide-open spaces and the drab, dusty little towns; the Old West comes off as a scary and melancholy place. Shot outside Santa Fe by Dean Semler. With Timothy Spall and Ariadna Gil.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/29/08.) (In wide release.)

BALLAST

The writer-director Lance Hammer's cannily calculated independent début feature packs the melodramatic wallop of Hollywood storytelling in its low-key on-location naturalism. The absorbing story, set in a desolate patch of the Mississippi Delta in wintertime, begins obliquely, when a man is found dead, a suicide, in his modest home. What emerges is a family saga, played out on an intimate scale, involving the dead man's ex-wife (Tarra Riggs), who had taken out an order of protection against him; his teen-age son, James (JimMyron Ross), who is involved with drug dealers; and his twin brother (Micheal J. Smith, Sr.), who ran a convenience store with him but has been reduced to passivity. Though working outside the studio system and seeming to offer an alternative aesthetic, Hammer pushes every button as knowingly as a Hollywood player: each piece of his script fits as if in a mosaic; the portentous, artificially moody images serve as mere illustrations; and he gets his immensely sympathetic cast of nonactors to emote like pros. Only a stonehearted viewer could fail to root for the central trio in their struggles against poverty and pain, but, when the lights go up, it's hard to avoid the feeling of having been taken in by formulas packaged as homemade.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

BLINDNESS

A man goes blind at the wheel of a car, and, one by one, the surrounding population—perhaps, who knows, the rest of the civilized world—follows suit. Whatever the cause, civilization itself begins to fray. A doctor (Mark Ruffalo), now blind, is quarantined in a secure facility, hemmed in by armed guards and forced first into proximity, and then into open discord, with a group of fellow-sufferers. The movie, written by Don McKellar and directed by Fernando Meirelles, is adapted from the novel by the Nobel laureate José Saramago, and it preserves both the bones of the plot and some of the authorial strategies—no character, for instance, is allotted a name. The book's insistence on the helpless moral numbing of society is flattened onscreen into a kind of savage dullness, and much of Meirelles's film, especially its sagging middle portion, comes across as a parable that badly wants (and badly fails) to be a story. Julianne Moore plays the doctor's wife, who can still see but neglects, for some reason, to spread the word. With a miscast Gael García Bernal, as the young tyrant of the blind ward, and Danny Glover, as his wise old opposite number.—*Anthony Lane* (10/6/08) (In limited release.)

BURN AFTER READING

This very black comedy by the Coen brothers is set in the pale-white light of a rather blanched Washington, D.C., an uninspiring and uncomfortable place in which everyone betrays everyone and the tone veers between icy politeness and spitting rage and then back again. The movie has abundant momentum—short, tightly knit scenes of people arguing, driving around, screwing, and fighting—but the farcical plot is so bleak and unfunny that it freezes your responses after about forty-five minutes. Frances McDormand is the gym administrator who thinks she needs money for extensive work on her face, arms, and tummy so she can meet better guys through an Internet dating service; Brad Pitt is her friend, a feckless, pre-sexual child who is constantly sucking on a water bottle. The two haplessly try to blackmail a canned, choleric C.I.A. agent (John Malkovich), and they cross paths with a variety of other lost people, including George Clooney's lightweight Lothario, a U.S. marshal who would sleep with a butterfly. Some of the actors show great professional skill, but the meanness of the entire conception is tiresome. The movie is the most emotionally stunted work of the brothers' career to date. With Tilda Swinton and Richard Jenkins.—*D.D.* (9/15/08) (In wide release.)

CHOUGA

The director Darezhan Omirbaev's reserved, elliptical updating of "Anna Karenina" to contemporary Kazakhstan pares the familiar story's relationships to power plays of a bare-bones starkness. Tléguen, an aspiring movie cameraman, is courting Altynaï, a student, who prefers Ablaï, the young scion of a wealthy businessman. But her beautiful and elegant sister, Chouga, who is married to an aging politician, comes to town and begins a passionate affair with Ablaï, even running off to Paris with him and leaving a seven-year-old son behind. Omirbaev tells the tale with briskness, simplicity, and restraint, getting his actors to move smoothly and to speak with understated, pointed calm and capturing their heartrending action in mock-bland images that alternate between stern assertion and stunned disbelief. The setting is a corrupt nouveau-riche society that, Omirbaev suggests, prospers through the gangland brutality of post-Soviet kleptocrats; in a wisp of an epilogue, he envisions future generations' demand for freedom. But all is not grim: the obligatory scene in Paris (the movie has French co-producers), depicting a film crew at work on location in view of the Eiffel Tower as its cameraman gets distracted by Chouga's alluring presence, is a masterstroke of lyrical comic genius. In Kazakh and Russian.—*R.B.* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 11.)

THE DUCHESS

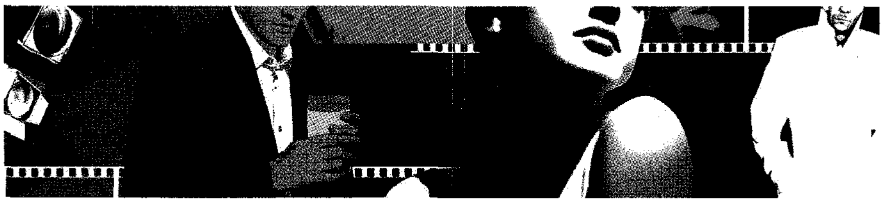
A slice from the life of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (Keira Knightley), who, we are told, cut a swath through English high society in the second half of the eighteenth century. The swath, as represented in Saul Dibb's film, seems less than formidable; the heroine's political acumen is displayed early on, in repartee at dinner, but then left largely to wilt, and her most memorable social appearance is a drunken stagger, during which her hedge-size wig catches fire. Ralph Fiennes plays her husband in a clever and, one suspects, accurate portrayal of a chilly pragmatist bent on producing an heir. If there is dullness at the heart of the film, that may be due less to the director (though he should have cut it by a good ten minutes) than to the source material; attempts to link Georgiana's story with a broken royal marriage of more recent vintage are tendentious at best. The most diverting character is Lady Elizabeth Foster (Hayley Atwell), the Duke's mistress, who moved in to create a ménage à trois, and who should have been the heroine of this movie. Atwell is bewitching enough to have held it in her spell. With Charlotte Rampling and, as Charles James Fox, a sly Simon McBurney.—*A.L.* (In wide release.)

EAGLE EYE

A sloppy but entertaining technology-gone-wild thriller, about a slacker (Shia LaBeouf) who teams with a threatened mom (Michelle Monaghan) when they receive sinister instructions from a disembodied voice. The film, directed by D. J. Caruso, is packed with action sequences that recall hits of the past (such as "North by Northwest" and "Enemy of the State") and that are so swiftly and energetically staged that their familiarity is almost welcome. The twists and turns of the plot (whom the two protagonists are running from, what they're doing) are more manufactured than written, but Caruso and the host of screenwriters craft the film's theme of paranoid surveillance for speed, not plausibility. They fail to say anything Orwellian about the times we live in; the hectic overplotting is so consumer-driven that it nearly devours itself.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE FAMILY THAT PREYS

The writer and director Tyler Perry, a savvy businessman (he owns all his films outright) who knows his audience (predominately Christian African-Americans), serves up another mediocre,



JOHN RITTER

DVD NOTES
THE OTHER HALF

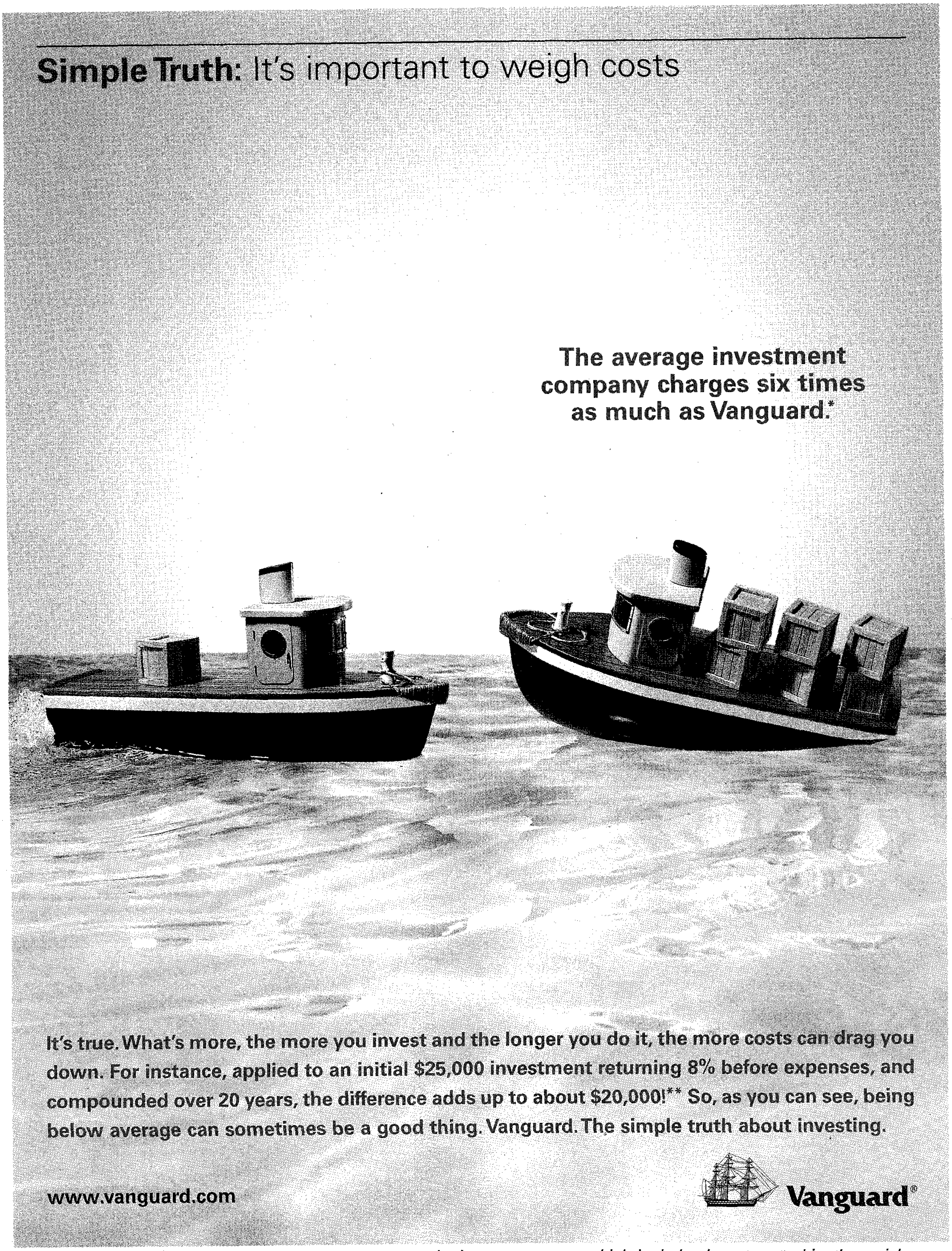
F. W. Murnau's 1924 drama **"The Last Laugh"** (a new restoration of which is featured in a two-disk set from Kino) may well be the apogee of silent-film production. From its small-scale story—the aging head doorman at a grand hotel can no longer lift heavy luggage, is demoted to men's-room attendant, and can't bear the humiliation—Murnau reconstructs an entire city, while making its every detail a reflection of the humble character's inner life. The visual clarity of the new release reveals the extraordinary means by which Murnau united the emotional, political, psychological, and moral domains in his quasi-Biblical yet modern and naturalistic fable.

Through his exacting attention to lighting, costume, décor, and performance, as well as his innovative stagecraft and camerawork, Murnau fused the visionary romanticism of his earlier films with a kind of sociological objectivity. The spectacular sets—from the hotel's bustling lobby and the gleaming streetside where the doorman reigns supreme to the looming downtown skyscrapers and the grim working-class complex where he lives—are turned into virtual characters by Murnau's "unchained" camera, which rolled through them on platforms, glided through them via an aerial bridge, or was carried among them strapped to the cameraman's chest.

The movie's emotional power owes much to its titanic star, Emil Jannings. The kind of histrionic expressions and gestures that, in the age of sound films, came to be seen as old-fashioned here achieve their apotheosis. Jannings, a master of the raised eyebrow, the sculptural pose, and the rubbery grimace, magnifies every fleeting mood to epic scope.

The drama turns on the need to preserve appearances, and Murnau calls attention to it in his focus on the hotel's polished halls, the doorman's obsessive primping, and his gold-braided martial uniform, to which his neighbors obsequiously defer. In shot after shot, made through windows and doors, the director suggests a society under surveillance, shunting hurts and desires into ever-deeper recesses, from the street to the back office, from the courtyard to the closed doors of home to the depths of mind revealed in dreams (and he films a superb one). This view of a society in thrall to order and ashamed of human feeling says much about the coming German horrors, and indeed Murnau had already planned his escape: "The Last Laugh" got him hired by the Fox studio and he went to Hollywood in 1926, never to work in Germany again.

—*Richard Brody*



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mawkish family-first movie. This one concerns two Southern matriarchs (Alfre Woodard and Kathy Bates) who laugh, cry, and wheedle their way through their problems. The film is boilerplate Perry: strong female characters (some selfish, some generous), soap-opera high jinks, and a love-will-find-a-way dénouement. The script is preposterous (a greedy daughter's comeuppance is portrayed in such broad strokes that the resolution feels trite and dishonest), but Bates and Woodard give lively performances that help it glide along, and Perry photographs everyone in a lovely amber light, which masks the thinly conceived characters in a sappy glow.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

GHOST TOWN

David Koepp, the co-writer of some of Steven Spielberg's biggest hits, turns the volume down to direct this romantic comedy, which breaks a cardinal rule of the genre: there's no kissing. Ricky Gervais stars as Bertram Pincus, a misanthropic dentist who, after a medical accident, sees ghosts—one of whom, the spirit of a philandering husband (Greg Kinnear), recruits Bertram to break up the engagement of his widow (Téa Leoni). The spry and lively screenplay, brought to life in clean New York locations, gives the actors plenty of moments to sparkle, and Koepp crafts small, sharp scenes as if he's conducting a pirouette. The film's touch of sentimentality makes it seem like a throwback to a gentler era, but Gervais tempers it with his faultless, cranky timing—no one does insecure grandiosity better. With Billy Campbell, Aasif Mandvi, and a scene-stealing Kristen Wiig.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

THE GIRL FROM THE MONCEAU BAKERY

In 1963, after his first film tanked, Eric Rohmer attempted to re-start his career with this small-scale 16-mm. short film. In the process, he found the style that would make his name. Anchoring flashy dialectics and moral fine points in a precise grid of geography and local customs, he tells the story of a law student (Barbet Schroeder, also the producer) who, frustrated in his efforts to date Sylvie (Michèle Girardon), an elegant art-gallery assistant, sets his sights on the coarser charms of Jacqueline (Claudine Soubrier), the shopgirl of the title. Contrasting the tale's action with the young man's self-justifying narration, Rohmer attaches the universal drama of love and lust to the specifics of one little snippet of Paris, seen through doors, out windows, and along streets. He films briskly on location with a controlled yet breezy view of the neighborhood and a distracted, pensive view of his characters, as if looking around while musing on higher matters. His plan is to frame chance as destiny—his great religious, quasi-metaphysical theme—and his message, his career-long trope, is the deferral of pleasure in anticipation of true love. The carnal brusqueness with which the young man paws Jacqueline during a casual conversation suggests the raging fires that Rohmer aims to bank. In French.—*R.B.* (BAM; Oct. 13.)

LAKEVIEW TERRACE

Neil LaBute's latest film, written by David Loughery and Howard Korder, is hard to place. It begins as a seething social drama, with the arrival of a mixed-race couple (Patrick Wilson and Kerry Washington) in a placid, law-abiding corner of Los Angeles. Here they bump up against their next-door neighbor, Abel Turner (Samuel L. Jackson), a policeman of implacable pride and prejudice. Jackson revels in the role, lording it over the other characters and turning the tale into a comedy of aggression and unease; you can sense the pleasure that he and LaBute derive from jostling the audience's racial attitudes. It's a shame, then, that the latter stages of the movie let us off the hook, settling for the contrivances and showdowns of a standard thriller; the setup seemed both more potent and more plausible when it was allowed to simmer. With Regine Nehy, who plays Abel's teen-age daughter with a perfect blend of languor and defiance, and who deserves to go far.—*A.L.* (9/22/08) (In wide release.)

NICK AND NORAH'S INFINITE PLAYLIST

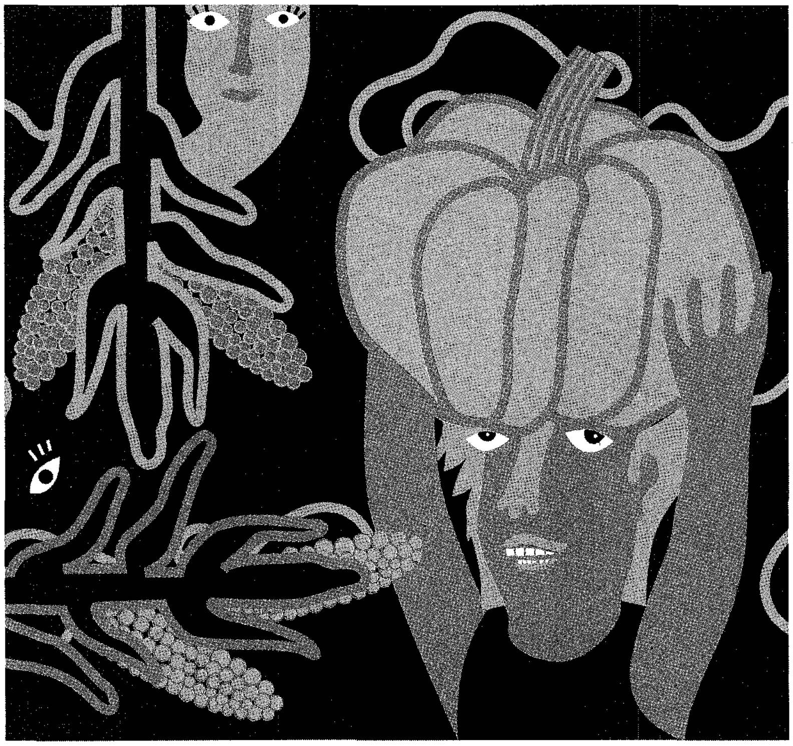
The core of this low-key teen romantic comedy, set in New York's indie-rock scene, is the chemistry of Michael Cera and Kat Dennings, who star as a pair of New Jersey high-school seniors, a heartbroken bassist and a recording-studio heiress, who are thrown together for an evening and discover their deeper connections. The story, turning on the quest for a band's secret show, swings between the authentically tender and the dully mechanical, but Peter Sollett's unintrusive direction gives the actors space to shine. Cera's line delivery is a national treasure, as he wrenches phrases from diffident silences to suggest a range of unexpressed thoughts beneath them, and Dennings speaks with a grounded intelligence that seems ready-made for the world that Woody Allen made famous. The scripted romance is sweet, charming, and realistic in tone, but its didactic elements (the evils of alcohol, the pointlessness of mere lust) allow for none of the acerbity and ambiguity of "Superbad," and it's undercut by the plot's implausible complications; still, some may agree with the movie's endorsement of shared musical taste as the touchstone of compatibility.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS

The Chicago resident Joe Swanberg and the New York-based Greta Gerwig directed and star in this "mumblecore" romantic drama as James, a videogame designer who lives in Chicago, and Maddie, a New York nursing student who writes in her spare time. In the opening long take, as they enter James's apartment, they strip each other in a minute and nineteen seconds, giving rise to a performance by Swanberg that is hard to fake. The humid intimacy makes clear what the artists think love is based on, but it soon becomes clear that the couple's long-distance bond is strained by their absence from the wider web of each other's life. As portrayed by the inventive Gerwig, Maddie, who is whimsically articulate and quietly tempestuous, is in command of the relationship; Swanberg makes James merely a man—stolid, ambitious, capable, sentimental, and self-absorbed. The seemingly improvised dialogue and unblocked staging lends emotional weight to their fleeting glances and sudden gestures, and such moments as a brief, inspired, tender streetside dance blossom exquisitely in real time. Gerwig and Swanberg rely heavily on their cameraman, who sometimes gets close enough to celebrate their beautiful imperfections but usually keeps the onscreen couple at a poignant distance and in ambiguous equilibrium; their raw, highly personalized methods convey the sense that the lives depicted on-camera and those lived behind it are one.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

PERSONA

In this film, as in his very early "Prison," the writer-director Ingmar Bergman involves us in the making of a movie. He gives us a movie within a movie, but he seems hardly to have made the enclosing movie, and then he throws away the inner one. It's a pity, because the inner movie had begun to involve us in marvellous possibilities: an actress (Liv Ullmann) who has abandoned the power of speech is put in the care of a nurse (Bibi Andersson), and the nurse, like an analysand who becomes furious at the silence of the analyst, begins to vent her own emotional disturbances. The two women look very much alike, and Bergman plays with this resemblance photographically by suggestive combinations and superimpositions. There is great intensity in many of the images, and there's one great passage: the nurse talks about a day and night of sex on a beach, and as she goes on talking, with memories of summer and nakedness and pleasure in her voice and the emptiness of her present life in her face, viewers may begin to hold their breath in fear that the director won't be able to sustain this almost intolerably difficult sequence. But he does, and it builds and builds and is completed. It's one of the rare truly erotic sequences in movie history. With Gunnar Björnstrand, and Jörgen Lindström as the boy. Cinematography by Sven Nykvist. In Swedish. Released in 1965.—*Pauline Kael* (IFC Center; Oct. 10-13.)



Pumpkins at the Queens County Farm Museum (see Above and Beyond).

DANIELA SCHÜTT POZZO

RACHEL GETTING MARRIED

The new Jonathan Demme film is one of his slighter and more oddball affairs. It stars Anne Hathaway as Kym, who leaves rehab—where she is being treated for drug addiction—to attend the wedding of her sister Rachel (Rosemarie DeWitt). This takes place at the family home in Connecticut, which has become, for the occasion, a multiethnic menagerie of liberal optimists, many bearing musical instruments. Not surprisingly, the festive air is spoiled by the intrusion of Kym, who feels constrained by her protective father (Bill Irwin) and then flashes into fearsome combat with her mother (Debra Winger). The movie is too long, and often wearying to watch, taking its visual cues from the unappeasable restlessness of the heroine. Yet the scene in which she is welcomed home, after a car accident, to be bathed and consoled by her sister without a word has a real, if exhausted, tenderness; the smarting emotions on show here are seldom contrived, and anyone versed in family conflict—that is, anyone with a family—will flinch at those moments when Demme cuts close to the bone.—*A.L.* (10/6/08) (In limited release.)

RELIGULOUS

This documentary, in which the libertarian comedian and talk-show host Bill Maher, teaming with

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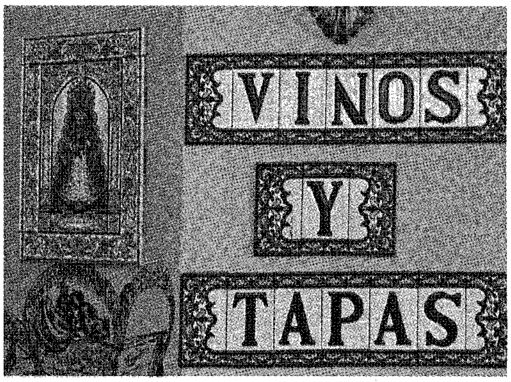


TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: ANDALUSIAN OLIVE OIL ©GARY YEOWELL/GETTY IMAGES; SIGN OUTSIDE BAR, COSTA DEL SOL ©KEN WELSH/ALAMY

Andalucía: Gastronomic Paradise

The cuisine of Andalucía is as rich with the spirit of improvisation as flamenco, the region's native dance. Tapas were first created here as ad hoc lids for glasses of Andalucía's famous sherry. Gazpacho is the signature dish, which began as a basic blend of bread, olive oil, garlic, vinegar, and spices. When Columbus brought back tomatoes and peppers from the New World, the recipe evolved into the familiar cold tomato soup so popular today, often presented as a gourmet dish served with savory garnishes. Also developed in the area is *ajo blanco,* a cold soup thickened with almonds that dates from the time of the Moors.

Dani García, a chef who is a rising star in Andalucía, continues the imaginative approach to food preparation at Calima, his beachside restaurant in Marbella. A disciple of Ferrán Adrià, who drew the food world to eastern Spain with his avant-garde interpretations of haute cuisine, García focuses on the agricultural wealth of his own native south. From his kitchen, the sea bass comes to the table grilled over hot coals and black sand, which evoke the sensations of a seaside barbecue.

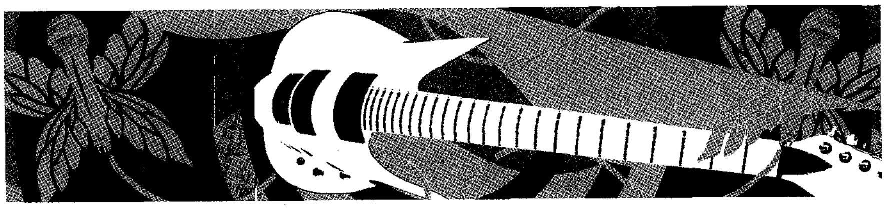
Andalucía's Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts are a constant reminder of sea-inspired feasts. Prawns, langoustines, clams, sardines, hake, bream, grouper, and tuna—all these and much more sizzle on grills and in sauté pans, ready to be anointed with the region's fruity olive oil. Andalucía is the world's largest producer of the golden elixir, with groves concentrated in Jaén and Córdoba provinces, and local cooks seem to have developed a special talent for frying. The exquisitely light crispness of fried anchovies, squid, and small fish is considered the perfect match for chilled, bone-dry Manzanilla sherry.

In the tapas bars of Seville and Granada, ham is the culinary star. The most coveted hams are the world-renowned *jamón de Jabugo*, the air-cured product of Iberian pigs who gorge on acorns and roots in the mountains of Huelva province. Connoisseurs of Spanish ham consider acorn-fed pigs to yield the best meat, which is why this exceptional ham is a favorite indulgence among locals and visitors.

WINE ROUTES

A tasting tour of Cádiz's Sherry Triangle towns and cities is a revelation of subtlety and nuance. Be sure to visit the wineries of Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and El Puerto de Santa Maria.

Visit SPAIN.INFO and ANDALUCIA.ORG when planning your trip to Spain.



POP NOTES
MUTTON DOING

People who call Lambchop a country band should probably stop. While the group's earlier albums, like "Nixon," were firmly within the countrypolitan tradition—mid-tempo epics strategically overproduced with lavish strings and horns—the music made these days by the singer and songwriter Kurt Wagner and his ensemble of adjustable size has little in common with either conventional or alternative country. Rather, it's a kind of hushed folk, in which Wagner's mumbled vocals and idiosyncratic lyrics sketch a picture of a world that is significantly more shadowy, tenuous, and romantic than our own.

On Lambchop's new album, **"(OH) ohio"** (Merge), Wagner's songs range from the mundane ("A Hold of You" is largely about a pencil, though it's also about making and controlling meaning with language) to the historical ("Sharing a Gibson with Martin Luther King, Jr."). His lyrics are always literate and usually literary; "National Talk Like a Pirate Day" is, according to Wagner, inspired by the work of Susan Sontag and Robert Louis Stevenson. In the course of the past few Lambchop records, the group took a slight left turn toward a jazzier sound that foregrounded band members like the pianist Tony Crow and the guitarist William Tyler. This time, the songs sound more like solo compositions for Wagner and his guitar, though "Popeye" moves the band into not particularly productive light-funk territory.

To say that Wagner can sometimes be diffuse is an understatement, but when he locks into a strong melody the diffusion only serves to make the songs dreamier. "Slipped Dissolved and Loosed," the lead single, is one of the most beautiful love songs Wagner has ever written, with an opening verse that perfectly captures the impossibility of truly knowing a romantic partner: "Well I'm not so well acquainted with the topography of your mind / I need a detailed description, a representation of some kind." The chorus quotes verbatim from the literary source that gives the song its title—the famous speech in Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" in which Troilus questions not only the nature of love but the entire cosmological order—though Wagner adds a conspicuous extra syllable to the word "dissolved." While borrowing from the Bard involves certain risks, here it's less hubristic than you might think.

—*Ben Greenman*

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the director Larry Charles, challenges the legitimacy of religion, is a globe-trotting conversation-starter. Maher's softhearted satirical dig at faith and the people who espouse it focusses primarily on literal interpretations of Bible stories (such as those of Noah's ark and Jonah and the whale). His interview technique isn't argumentative—he sees religion as anti-rational—and his comedy plays out as frustration rather than as mean-spiritedness. The filmmakers have smartly chosen to film in locations where the faithful gather, and the film benefits from its you-are-there style. In an odd note of irony, the film is, in effect, preaching to the unconverted.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

RIGHTEOUS KILL

Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, acting together as aging N.Y.P.D. detectives, send up a howling wind of boasts, profane stories, lewd jokes, denunciations of criminals, expressions of admiration for each other, and mutual reassurances of their own virtue as cops. We've heard more enlightening dialogue at closing time in an Upper Broadway bar, but the two go at it furiously, as if the raw humor and mawkish bombast were somehow the soul of humanity. The movie, written by Russell Gewirtz and directed by Jon Avnet, is nonsense about a serial killer who leaves behind poems at the scene of the crime. Suspicion is thrown on one character, yet, when the killer turns out to be someone else, we're left not with the elation of solving a mystery from planted clues but with the chagrin of having been taken in by a ruse. Hectic, exhausting, unrewarding. With the lovely Carla Gugino, who is having some sort of "hot" sadomasochistic love affair (they stage mock rapes in her apartment) with De Niro.—*D.D.* (9/29/08) (In wide release.)

TERROR'S ADVOCATE

Barbet Schroeder's fascinating, appalling documentary portrait of the French attorney Jacques Vergès, who enthusiastically represented Klaus Barbie, Carlos the Jackal, and other innocent bystanders, is about much more than one man's delusions. The film traces Vergès's life and work (with his vigorous participation), from the racial discrimination he faced in his youth (his mother was from Vietnam, his father from Réunion) to his first major case, the defense of the Algerian militant Djamila Bouhired, who planted a bomb in an Algiers café in 1956, killing eleven people. Saving Bouhired from the death penalty by mobilizing international sympathy, Vergès then married her and avoided politics until the mid-sixties, when he represented Palestinian terrorists and became a Maoist. Then, after dropping out of sight for a few years, he worked for the Baader-Meinhof gang and other agents of destruction. With probing interviews, intrepid legwork, and sharp editing, Schroeder exposes an underground network that hijacked the anti-colonialist movement from behind the Iron Curtain with the help of unregenerate Nazis and other anti-liberals. With regret, he locates the roots of international terrorism in the ruthless tactics of Algerian independence fighters. The story that unfolds is not just Vergès's but also Schroeder's own, that of a generation that had its humanistic sympathies manipulated and abused by radically unscrupulous people with horrific agendas. In French, German, English, Arabic, and Khmer.—*R.B.* (BAM; Oct. 10.)

A THOUSAND YEARS OF GOOD PRAYERS

There isn't a missed beat in Wayne Wang's new film, a quiet symphony about a distant Chinese father (Henry O) visiting his newly divorced daughter (Faye Yu) in America, where he befriends an elderly Iranian woman (Vida Ghahremani). The title of the film refers to an old proverb about what it takes for a father and daughter to truly communicate, and the film reflects a solemn, almost churchlike atmosphere that's both contemplative and soothing. Wang's concerns are modest: gently prodding the cultural and generational issues between father and daughter, he avoids any histrionic scenes that would break the film's sad and gentle tempo. In Mandarin, Farsi, and English.—*B.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

JOHN RITTER

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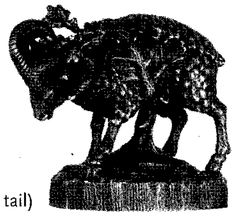

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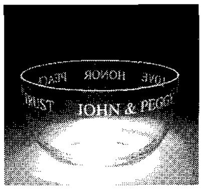

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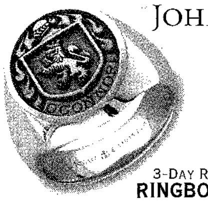

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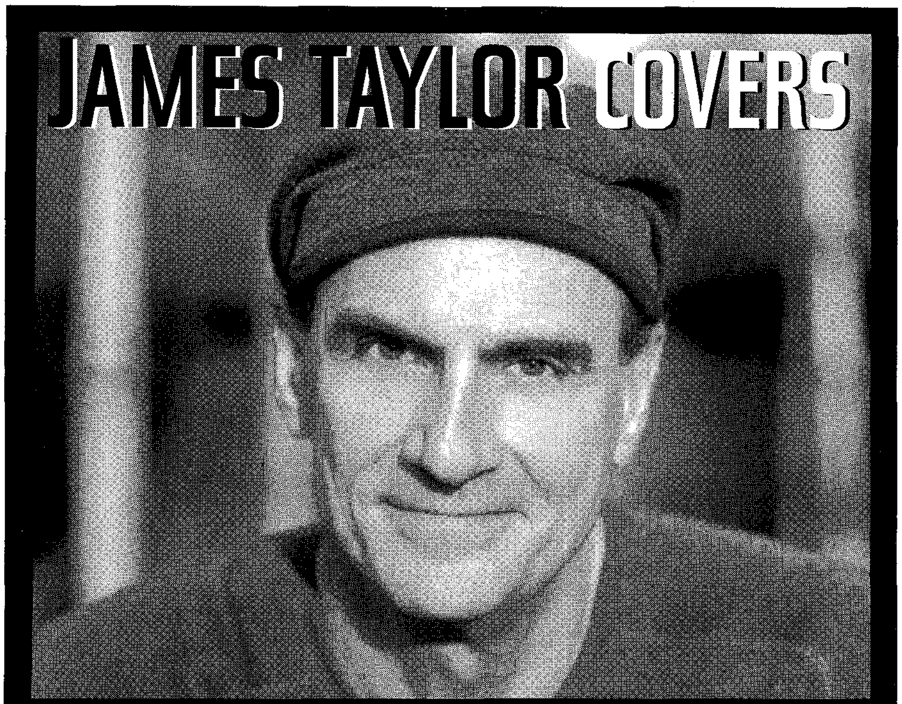

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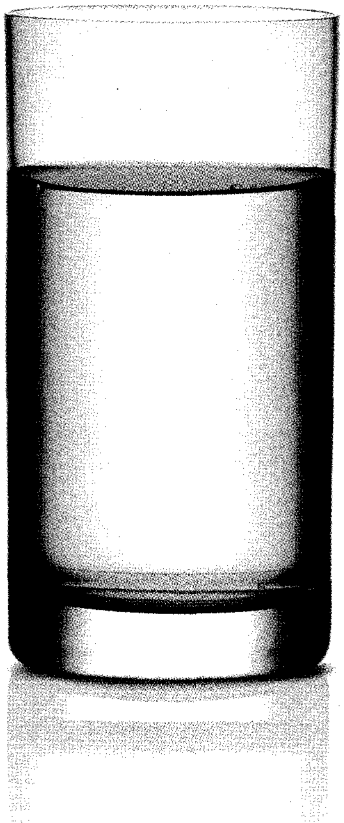


Emissions so clean
you could drink them.

THE WOMEN
A remake of George Cukor's film of 1939, with the screen once more denuded of men. The title is unchanged, and so are the names of many characters, together with their bottomless reserves of cash; we are plunged as before into a marital crisis, with Mary Haines (Meg Ryan, taking over the Norma Shearer role) discovering that her husband has been seeing a shopgirl. The part of the temptress, played formerly by Joan Crawford, now goes to Eva Mendes, so at least the new version gains something in credibility. Apart from that, it is a poor travesty of the original, with one dud zinger after another sinking to the floor, the air thick with either vengeance or gratification, and the entire cast—save Candice Bergen and Cloris Leachman, experienced hands who know how to rise above disaster—looking unmistakably ill at ease. (The writer and director is Diane English, who worked with Bergen on the TV series "Murphy Brown.") The fashion show, slotted into Cukor's monochrome movie as a classy yet lengthy flourish of color, has now been shifted toward the end, but it doesn't help. With Annette Bening, Jada Pinkett Smith, and Debra Messing.—*A.L.* (9/22/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CHOKE: In limited release. **THE LUCKY ONES:** In wide release. **MIRACLE AT ST. ANNA:** In wide release. **NIGHTS IN RODANTHE:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Oct. 8-11: The New York Turkish Film Festival. For program information, visit www.nyturkishfilmfestival.com. ♦ The films of Nathaniel Dorsky. Oct. 9 at 8: Program 3, including "Summerwind" (1965). ♦ The films of Beryl Sokoloff. Oct. 10 at 7: Program 1, "Art/Politics and Society," including "My Mirrored Hope" (1961). ♦ Oct. 10 at 9: Program 2, "NYC/Travels."

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—"Under Mao's Red Sun: China's Cultural Revolution on Film." Oct. 11 at 3: "Chung Kuo China" (1972, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian and Mandarin).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through Oct. 21: The films of Barbet Schroeder. Oct. 8 at 4:30 and 9:30 and Oct. 9 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Six in Paris" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Jean Rouch, Jean Douchet, and Jean-Daniel Pollet; in French). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6:50: "More" (1969). ♦ Oct. 10 at 3, 6:15, and 9: "Terror's Advocate" (†). ♦ Oct. 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Barfly" (1987). ♦ Oct. 12 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Maîtresse" (1976; in French). ♦ Oct. 13 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Girl from the Monceau Bakery" (†) and "Suzanne's Career" (1963). ♦ Oct. 14 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Before and After" (1996). ♦ Oct. 14 at 6:50: "Reversal of Fortune" (1990).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Alberto Sordi. All films are in Italian. Oct. 8 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20: "Everybody Go Home" (1960, Luigi Comencini). ♦ Oct. 8 at 3:45 and 7:40: "A Hero of Our Times" (1955, Mario Monicelli). ♦ Oct. 9 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "A Difficult Life" (1961, Dino Risi). ♦ Oct. 9 at 3:15 and 7:25: "The Widower" (1959, Risi). ♦ In revival. Oct. 10-30 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Lola Montès" (1955, Max Ophüls; in French and German).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"I Kiffe NY: French Urban Cultures." Oct. 14 at 12:30 and 7: "Neighbors" (2004, Malik Chibane; in French). The 7 P.M. screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Oct. 14 at 4: "Wesh Wesh, What's Happening?" (2001, Rabah Ameur-Zaïmèche; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Ingmar Bergman. Oct. 10-13 at 11 A.M.:

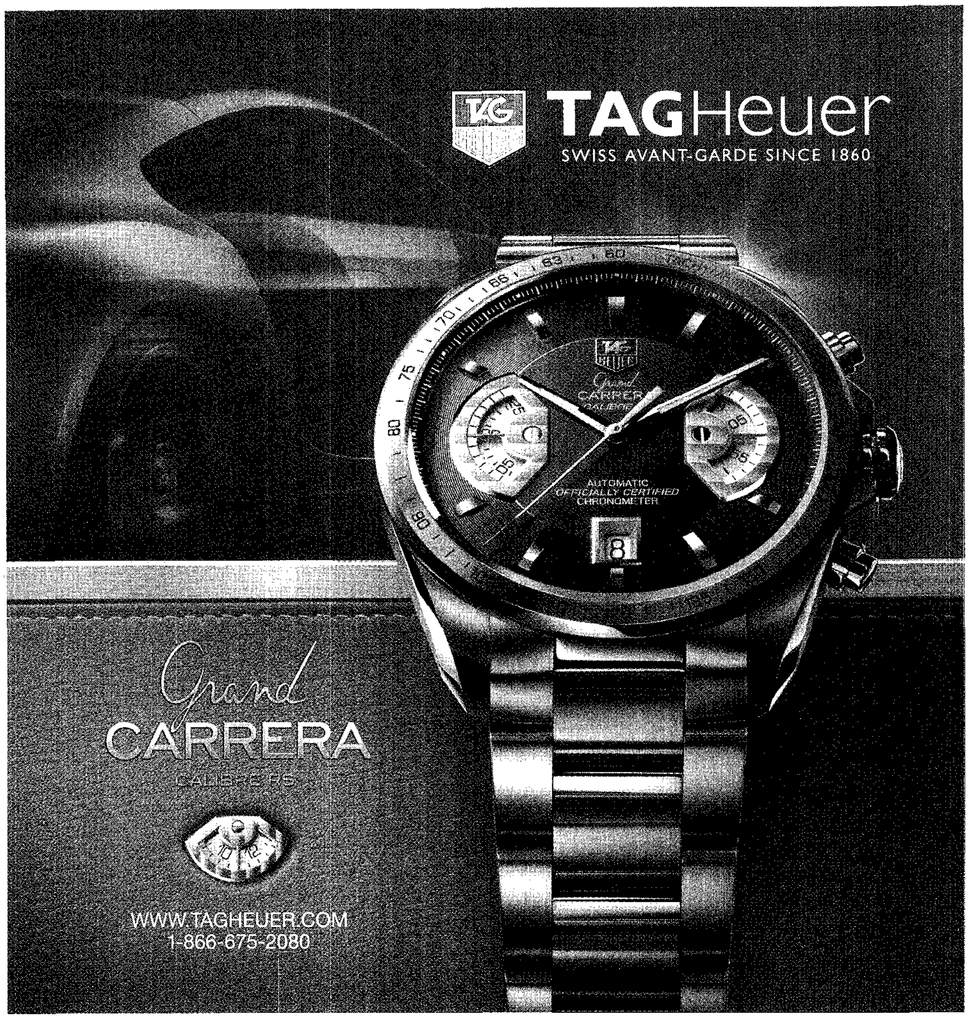
"Persona" (†). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Oct. 14 at 8: "Of All the Things" (2008, Jody Lambert).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Oct. 8-10 at 1:30: "The Virgin Suicides" (1999, Sofia Coppola). ♦ "Hollywood on the Hudson: Filmmaking in New York, 1920-39." Oct. 8 at 6: "The Talk of Hollywood" (1929, Mark Sandrich). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6 and Oct. 13 at 6:30: "The Emperor Jones" (1932, Dudley Murphy). ♦ Oct. 9 at 8: "One Third of a Nation" (1939, Murphy). ♦ Oct. 10 at 6:15 and Oct. 11 at 2: "Animal Crackers" (1930, Victor Heerman). ♦ Oct. 10 at 8:15: Dudley Murphy on American music, including "St. Louis Blues" (1929). ♦ Oct. 11 at 4:15: "Laughter" (1930, Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast). ♦ Oct. 11 at 6:30: "Applause" (1929, Rouben Mamoulian). ♦ Oct. 11 at 8:30 and Oct. 13 at 4:30: "The Smiling Lieutenant" (1931, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Oct. 12 at 1:30: "Tango in Broadway" (1934, Louis Gasnier). ♦ Oct. 12 at 3:15: "Back Door to Heaven" (1939, William K. Howard). ♦ Oct. 12 at 5:15: "Intolerance of 1933 (Victims of Persecution)" (1933, Bud Pollard). ♦ Oct. 13 at 8:15: "Moonlight and Pretzels" (1933, Karl Freund). ♦ "Delwende" and African films from the museum's collection. Oct. 8 at 6:15, Oct. 9 at 8:15, Oct. 10 at 6, Oct. 11 at 2 and 6, Oct. 12 at 2, and Oct. 13 at 4:30: "Delwende" (2005, S. Pierre Yameogo; in More and French). ♦ Oct. 8 at 8: "Daughter of Keltoum" (2001, Mehdi Charef; in Arabic and French). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6:15: "Rachida" (2002, Yamina Bachir-Chouikh; in Arabic). ♦ Oct. 10-11 at 8: "Njagnaan" (1974, Mahama Johnson Traoré; in Wolof and French). ♦ Oct. 11 at 4 and Oct. 13 at 8:15: "Borom Sarret" (1963, Ousmane Sembène; in French) and "The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun" (1999, Djibril Diop Mambéty; in French and Wolof). ♦ Oct. 12 at 4: "Camera d'Afrique: Twenty Years of African Cinema" (1983, Férid Boughedir; in French). ♦ Oct. 13 at 6:30: "Mossane" (1996, Safi Faye; in Wolof).

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL

Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—Screenings are held at a variety of venues. For complete program information, visit www.filmlinc.com. Oct. 8 at 6: "The Headless Woman" (2008, Lucrecia Martel; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 8 at 9: "Afterschool" (2008, Antonio Campos). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6 and Oct. 11 at 9:15: "Tokyo Sonata" (2008, Kiyoshi Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 9 at 9 and Oct. 11 at 6: "Tulpan" (2008, Sergey Dvortsevoy; in Russian). ♦ Oct. 10 at 6 and Oct. 11 at 11:15 A.M.: "A Christmas Tale" (2008, Arnaud Desplechin; in French). ♦ Oct. 10 at 9:45 and Oct. 12 at 11:15 A.M.: "Let It Rain" (2008, Agnès Jaoui; in French). ♦ Oct. 11 at 3: "Chouga" (†). ♦ Oct. 12 at 2:30: "Bullet in the Head" (2008, Jaime Rosales; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 12 at 5:15: "Serbis" (2008, Brillante Mendoza; in Filipino and Tagalog). ♦ Oct. 12 at 8:30: "The Wrestler" (2008, Darren Aronofsky). ♦ Special screenings. Oct. 10 at 6:15: "Pandora and the Flying Dutchman" (1951, Albert Lewin), introduced by Martin Scorsese. ♦ Oct. 11 at 6:30: "The Day Shall Dawn" (1959, A. J. Kardar). ♦ Oct. 12 at 1: "It's Hard Being Loved by Jerks" (2008, Daniel Leconte; in French), followed by a panel discussion with the director, the professors Carol Becker and Marshall Cohen, and others. ♦ The films of Nagisa Oshima. Except where noted, all films are in Japanese. Oct. 8 at 4:30 and Oct. 11 at 4: "Death by Hanging" (1968). ♦ Oct. 8 at 7: "Diary of a Shinjuku Thief" (1968). ♦ Oct. 8 at 9: "Sing a Song of Sex" (1967). ♦ Oct. 9 at 4:30 and Oct. 12 at 9: "Dear Summer Sister" (1972). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6:30: "Boy" (1969). ♦ Oct. 9 at 8:30 and Oct. 10 at 2: "Three Resurrected Drunkards" (1968). ♦ Oct. 10 at 3:45 and Oct. 13 at 4: "Kyoto, My Mother's Place" (1991) and "100 Years of Japanese Cinema" (1994). ♦ Oct. 10 at 9: "Max Mon Amour" (1986; in French and English). ♦ Oct. 11 at 9: "Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence" (1983; in English and Japanese). ♦ Oct. 12 at 4:30: "The Man Who Left His Will on Film" (1970). ♦ Oct. 12 at 6:30: "The Ceremony" (1971). ♦ Oct. 13 at 2 and 8:45: "Taboo" (1999).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NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-712-7237)—"The Silent Clowns Film Series." Oct. 12 at 2: Short films featuring Charley Chase, including "A Versatile Villain" (1915, Frank Griffith), followed by a Q. & A. with the historians Bruce Lawton and Steve Massa.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." Oct. 10 at 9:30: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian), introduced by Ben Karlin.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine @Midnight." Oct. 10-11: "The Dark Crystal" (1982, Jim Henson and Frank Oz).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Nov. 2: "Paul Schrader's Personal Choice." Oct. 12 at 1 and 6: "The Comfort of Strangers" (1990, Schrader). ♦ Oct. 12 at 3 and 8: "Lolita" (1961, Stanley Kubrick).

READINGS AND TALKS

"POETS OUT LOUD"
Fordham University's reading series presents Sarah Gambito, Myung Mi Kim, Ravi Shankar, and Kelly Tsai. (113 W. 60th St., 12th fl. No tickets necessary. Oct. 8 at 7.)

CASSANDRA WILSON
The jazz vocalist talks about her career with the critic Gary Giddins. (City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 9 at 6:30.)

THE MONTAUK CLUB
The noted Italian cookbook author Marcella Hazan and her husband and collaborator, Victor, read from her memoir, "Amarcord: Marcella Remembers." (25 Eighth Ave., Brooklyn. 800-838-3006. Oct. 10 at 6:30.)

"LITERARY DEATH MATCH"
The magazine *Opium* celebrates the release of its seventh issue with a humor-writing competition. Katherine Taylor, Thomas Hopkins, Dennis DiClaudio, and Thaddeus Rutkowski will try, in ten minutes or less, to impress a panel of judges consisting of the writers Jodi Bullock, Gabriel Delahaye, and Ben Greenman (who is an editor at this magazine). (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Oct. 14 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HARVEST TIME
With the price of gas being what it is, a quick trip to the country for, say, a Halloween pumpkin and some fresh air requires much consideration. So what's an urbanite to do? Head to the Queens County Farm Museum, the oldest patch of continuously farmed land in New York State, where visitors can pick their own pumpkins. Wandering the field is free; the pumpkins' prices are determined by weight. (73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Floral Park. 718-347-3276. Saturdays and Sundays from 11 to 4. Through Oct. 26.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
If, as Susan Sontag wrote, "to collect photographs is to collect the world," what worlds will be revealed in this week's auctions of photographs? **Christie's** holds three of them, beginning with a selection of ninety-three contemporary prints (Oct. 13), in which one can peek into the worlds of Vik Muniz, Nan Goldin, and Hiroshi Sugimoto, among others. A more unified vision is offered in the evening, with a sale devoted to the poetry of the ordinary, as captured in the work of William Eggleston (from the collection of Bruce and Nancy Berman). The erotic connection between photographer and muse infuses Edward Weston's "Nude of Tina Modotti, 1923," one of the highlights of the house's more general sale of photographs the next day (Oct. 14). On a different note, the house will celebrate the hundred-and-seventy-fifth anniversary of the guitar-maker C. F. Martin in its auction of musical instruments (Oct. 10), a sale that includes forty-nine Martin guitars, several of which are prototypes or limited editions. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ A more languorous version of the nude Tina Modotti by Weston, from the same period and in the same location (a Mexico City rooftop, 1923-24), is one of the top lots at **Sotheby's** two-day sale of photographs (Oct. 14-15). The range of periods and subjects in this sale is vast, from nineteenth-century images (such as Carleton E. Watkins's albumen prints made in the wilds of Oregon in 1867) and modernist compositions (such as Imogen Cunningham's "False Hellebore") to fashion plates by Avedon, unforgiving portraits by Diane Arbus, and a sexy biker girl by Richard Prince. The house will also present an exhibition of Chinese export ceramic figures from the collection of James E. Sowell (Oct. 15-21), a companion to the release of a new book on the subject, "Mandarin and Menagerie." (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

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DIVYA SRINIVASAN

"Beyond Babylon," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE
TUDOR HOUSE
Oct. 21-Nov. 2

This fall, American Ballet Theatre celebrates the British choreographer Antony Tudor (1909-87); on opening night, Gillian Murphy and David Hallberg will dance the pas de deux from his one-act "Romeo and Juliet." (212-581-1212.)

MOVIES
INSIDE AND OUT
Oct. 31-Nov. 5

The French film director Jean-Daniel Pollet was praised, in 1959, at the age of twenty-two, by Jean-Luc Godard, and went on to have a wildly diverse career that included comedies, formal experiments such as "Méditerranée," an adaptation of Maupassant's horror story "Le Horla," and "L'Ordre," a documentary about an abandoned leper colony in Greece. Anthology Film Archives screens these and other rare films by Pollet, who died in 2004. (212-505-5181.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SPANISH HOURS
Nov. 1

"Art of the Guitar," a consistently satisfying series offered by the 92nd Street Y, begins its season with a recital by the young soloist Jason Vieaux, who adds music by Bach and Pat Metheny to a program of Hispanic works by Albéniz, Ponce, and Leo Brouwer. (212-415-5500.)

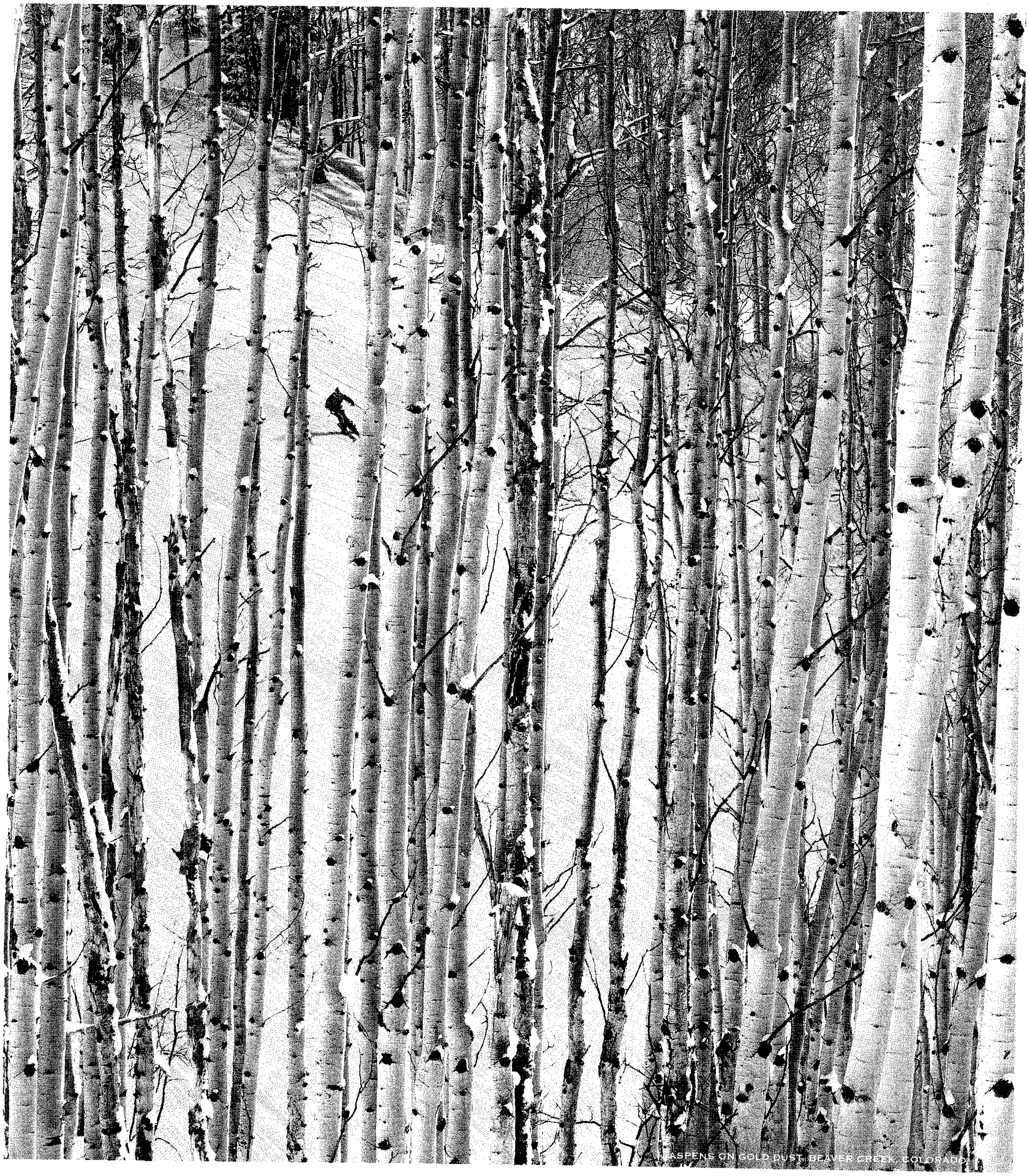
ART
DIPLOMATIC SCORE
Nov. 18-March 15

In the Bronze Age, far-flung royal houses—from Mesopotamia to the Caucasus, and from Greece to Iran—forged alliances via trade routes, exchanging gifts of gold, jewels, and other precious cargo. "Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.," at the Met, illuminates these relationships in a major loan exhibition of more than three hundred objects. (212-535-7710.)

NIGHT LIFE
BLUE SKIES
Nov. 21

Brian Wilson returns with a new album, "That Lucky Old Sun," and a show at the Hammerstein Ballroom. Expect classic Beach Boys hits alongside the new material. (212-307-7171.)

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.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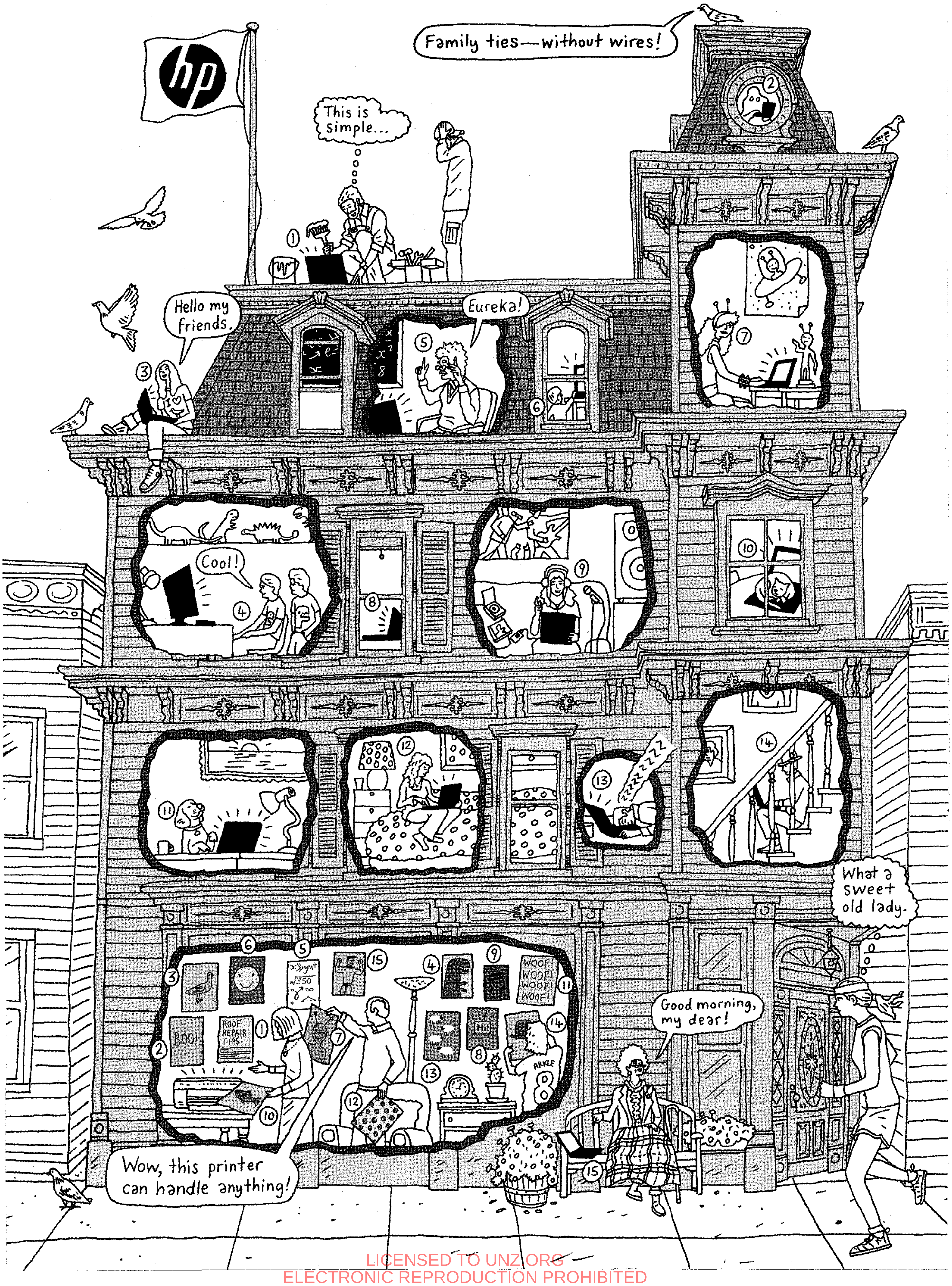
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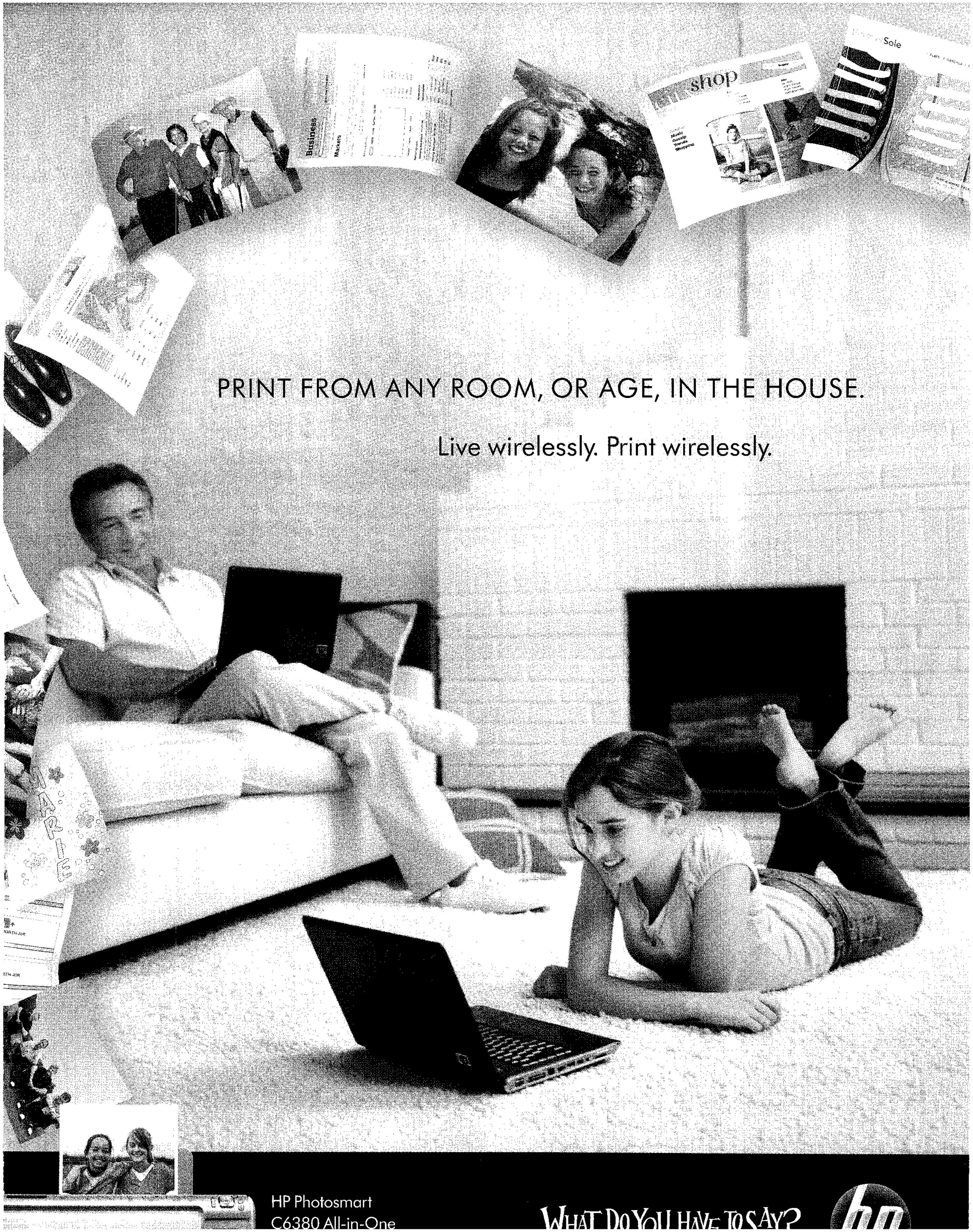
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THE
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
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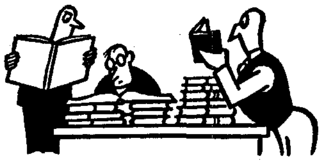
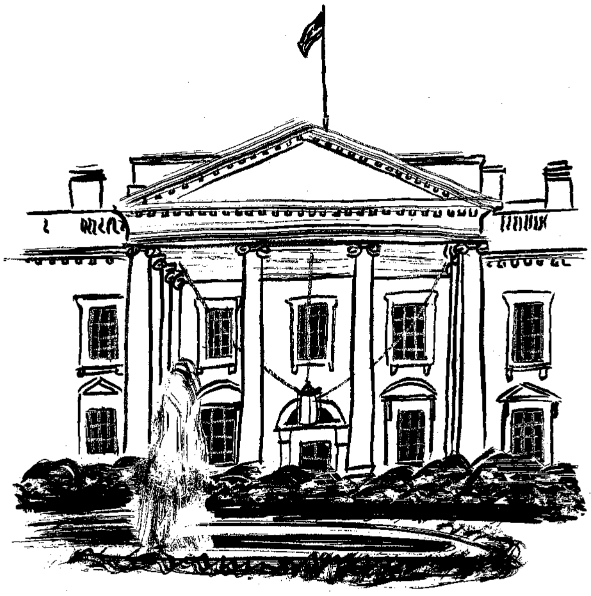


Never in living memory has an election been more critical than the one fast approaching—that's the quadrennial cliché, as expected as the balloons and the bombast. And yet when has it ever felt so urgently true? When have so many Americans had so clear a sense that a Presidency has—at the levels of competence, vision, and integrity—undermined the country and its ideals?

The incumbent Administration has distinguished itself for the ages. The Presidency of George W. Bush is the worst since Reconstruction, so there is no mystery about why the Republican Party—which has held dominion over the executive branch of the federal government for the past eight years and the legislative branch for most of that time—has little desire to defend its record, domestic or foreign. The only speaker at the Convention in St. Paul who uttered more than a sentence or two in support of the President was his wife, Laura. Meanwhile, the nominee, John McCain, played the part of a vaudeville illusionist, asking to be regarded as an apostle of change after years of embracing the essentials of the Bush agenda with ever-increasing ardor.

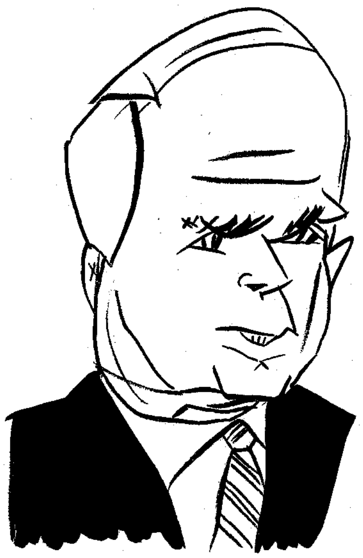
The Republican disaster begins at home. Even before taking into account whatever fantastically expensive plan eventually emerges to help rescue the financial system from Wall Street's long-running pyramid schemes, the economic and fiscal picture is bleak. During the Bush Administration, the national debt, now approaching ten trillion dollars, has nearly doubled. Next year's federal budget is projected to run a half-trillion-dollar deficit, a precipitous fall from the seven-hundred-billion-dollar *surplus* that was projected when Bill Clinton left office. Private-sector job creation has been a sixth of what it was under President Clinton. Five million people have fallen into poverty. The number of Americans without health insurance has grown by seven million, while average premiums have nearly doubled. Meanwhile, the principal domestic achievement of the Bush Administration has been to shift the relative burden of taxation from the rich to the rest. For the top one per cent of us, the Bush tax cuts are worth, on average, about a thousand dollars a week; for the bottom fifth, about a dollar and a half. The unfairness will only increase if the painful, yet necessary, effort to rescue the credit markets ends up preventing the rescue of our health-care system, our environment, and our physical, educational, and industrial infrastructure.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

At the same time, a hundred and fifty thousand American troops are in Iraq and thirty-three thousand are in Afghanistan. There is still disagreement about the wisdom of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and his horrific regime, but there is no longer the slightest doubt that the Bush Administration manipulated, bullied, and lied the American public into this war and then mismanaged its prosecution in nearly every aspect. The direct costs, besides an expenditure of more than six hundred billion dollars, have included the loss of more than four thousand Americans, the wounding of thirty thousand, the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis, and the displacement of four and a half million men, women, and children. Only now, after American forces have been fighting for a year longer than they did in the Second World War, is there a glimmer of hope that the conflict in Iraq has entered a stage of fragile stability.

The indirect costs, both of the war in particular and of the Administration's unilateralist approach to foreign policy in general, have also been immense. The torture of prisoners, authorized at the highest level, has been an ethical and a public-diplomacy catastrophe. At a moment when the global environment, the global economy, and global stability all demand a transition to new sources of energy, the United States has been a global retrograde, wasteful in its consumption and heedless in its policy. Strategically and morally, the Bush Administration has squandered the American capacity to counter the example and the swagger of its rivals. China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other illiberal states have concluded, each in its own way, that democratic principles and human rights need not be components of a stable, prosperous future. At recent meetings of the United Nations, emboldened despots like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran came to town sneering at our predicament and hailing the "end of the American era."



The election of 2008 is the first in more than half a century in which no incumbent President or Vice-President is on the ballot. There is, however, an incumbent party, and that party has been lucky enough to find itself, apparently against the wishes of its "base," with a nominee who evidently disliked George W. Bush before it became fashionable to do so. In South Carolina in 2000, Bush crushed John McCain with a sub-rosa primary campaign of such viciousness that McCain lashed out memorably against Bush's Christian-right allies. So profound was McCain's anger that in 2004 he flirted with the possibility of joining the Democratic ticket under John Kerry. Bush, who took office as a "compassionate conservative," governed immediately as a rightist ideologue. During that first term, McCain bolstered his reputation, sometimes deserved, as a "maverick" willing to work with Democrats on such issues as normalizing relations with Vietnam, campaign-finance reform, and immigration reform. He co-sponsored, with John Edwards and Edward Kennedy, a patients' bill of rights. In 2001 and 2003, he voted against the Bush tax cuts. With John Kerry, he co-sponsored a bill raising auto-fuel efficiency standards and, with Joseph Lieberman, a cap-and-trade regime on carbon emissions. He was one of a minority of Republicans opposed to unlimited drilling for oil and gas off America's shores.

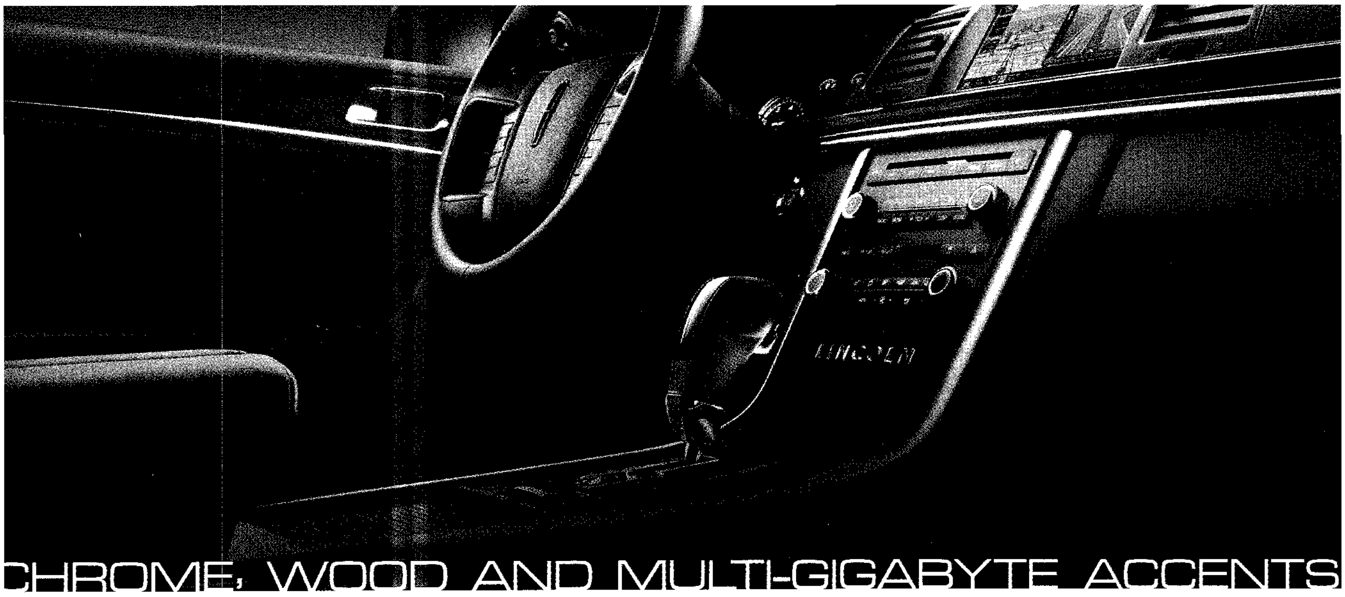
Since the 2004 election, however, McCain has moved remorselessly rightward in his quest for the Republican nomination. He paid obeisance to Jerry Falwell and preachers of his ilk. He abandoned immigration reform, eventually coming out against his own bill. Most shocking, McCain, who had repeatedly denounced torture under all circumstances, voted in February against a ban on the very techniques of "enhanced interrogation" that he himself once endured in Vietnam—as long as the torturers were civilians employed by the C.I.A.

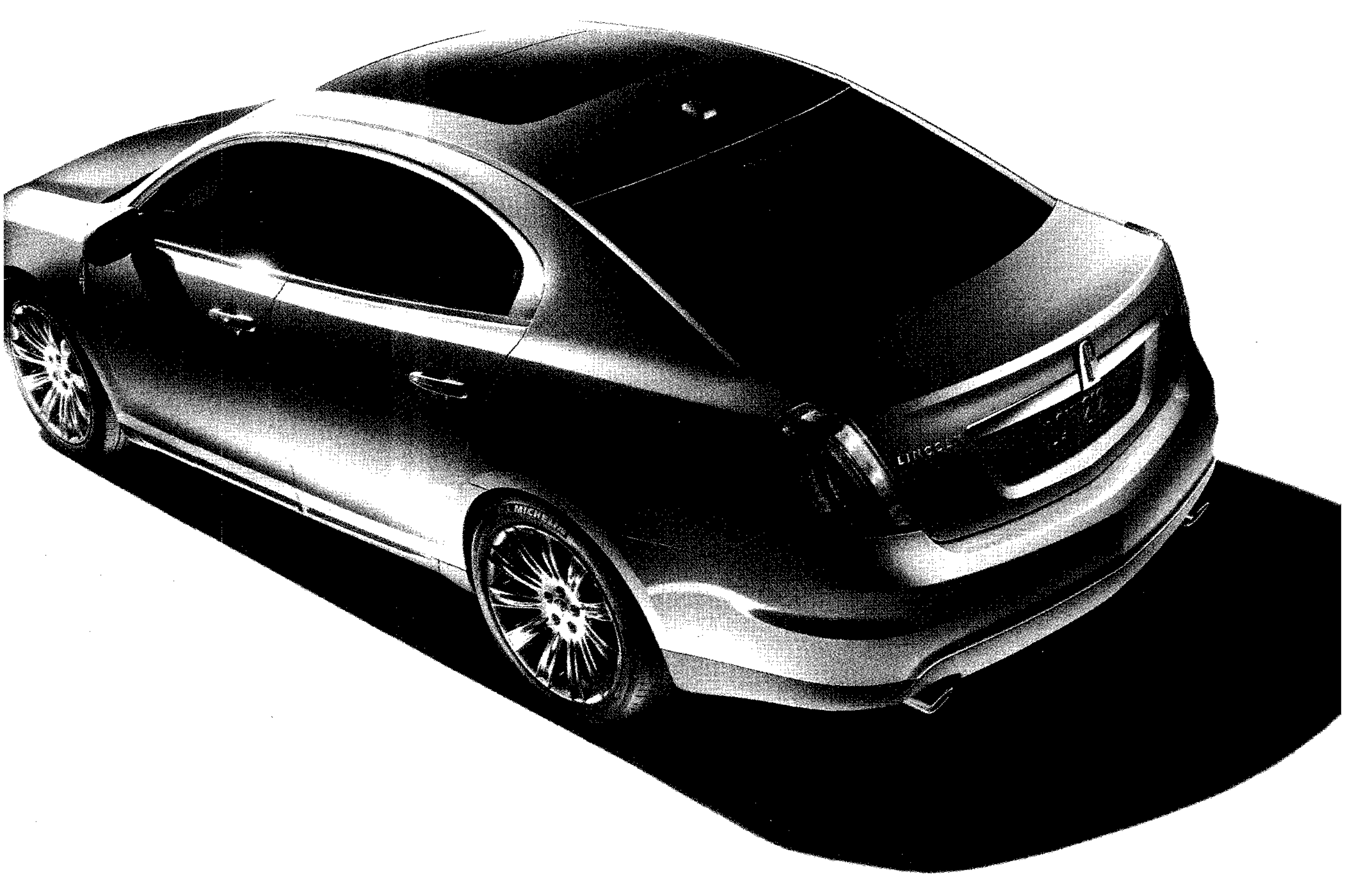
On almost every issue, McCain and the Democratic Party's nominee, Barack Obama, speak the generalized language of "reform," but only Obama has provided a convincing, rational, and fully developed vision. McCain has abandoned his opposition to the Bush-era tax cuts and has taken up the demagogic call—in the midst of recession and Wall Street calamity, with looming crises in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—for *more* tax cuts. Bush's expire in 2011. If McCain, as he has proposed, cuts taxes for corporations and estates, the benefits once more would go disproportionately to the wealthy.

In Washington, the craze for pure market triumphalism is over. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson arrived in town (via Goldman Sachs) a Republican, but it seems that he will leave a Democrat. In other words, he has come to see that the abuses that led to the current financial crisis—not least, excessive speculation on borrowed capital—can be fixed only with government regulation and oversight. McCain, who has never evinced much interest in, or knowledge of, economic questions, has had little of substance to say about the crisis. His most notable gesture of concern—a melodramatic call last month to suspend his campaign and postpone the first Presidential debate until the government bailout plan was ready—soon revealed itself as an empty diversionary tactic.

By contrast, Obama has made a serious study of the mechanics and the history of this economic disaster and of the possibilities of stimulating a recovery. Last March, in New York, in a speech notable for its depth, balance, and foresight, he said, "A complete disdain for pay-as-you-go budgeting, coupled with a generally scornful attitude towards oversight and enforcement, allowed far too many to put short-term gain ahead of long-term consequences." Obama is committed to reforms that value not only the restoration of stability but also the protection of the vast majority of the population, which did not partake of the fruits of the binge years. He has called for greater and more programmatic regulation of the financial system; the creation of a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank, which would help reverse the decay of our roads, bridges, and mass-transit systems, and create millions of jobs; and a major investment in the green-energy sector.

On energy and global warming, Obama offers a set of forceful proposals. He supports a cap-and-trade program to reduce America's carbon emissions by eighty per cent by 2050—an enormously ambitious goal, but one that many climate scientists say must be met if atmospheric carbon dioxide is to be kept below disastrous levels. Large emitters, like utilities, would acquire


CHROME, WOOD AND MULTI-GIGABYTE ACCENTS



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carbon allowances, and those which emit less carbon dioxide than their allotment could sell the resulting credits to those which emit more; over time, the available allowances would decline. Significantly, Obama wants to auction off the allowances; this would provide fifteen billion dollars a year for developing alternative-energy sources and creating job-training programs in green technologies. He also wants to raise federal fuel-economy standards and to require that ten per cent of America's electricity be generated from renewable sources by 2012. Taken together, his proposals represent the most coherent and far-sighted strategy ever offered by a Presidential candidate for reducing the nation's reliance on fossil fuels.

There was once reason to hope that McCain and Obama would have a sensible debate about energy and climate policy. McCain was one of the first Republicans in the Senate to support federal limits on carbon dioxide, and he has touted his own support for a less ambitious cap-and-trade program as evidence of his independence from the White House. But, as polls showed Americans growing jittery about gasoline prices, McCain apparently found it expedient in this area, too, to shift course. He took a dubious idea—lifting the federal moratorium on offshore oil drilling—and placed it at the very center of his campaign. Opening up America's coastal waters to drilling would have no impact on gasoline prices in the short term, and, even over the long term, the effect, according to a recent analysis by the Department of Energy, would be "insignificant." Such inconvenient facts, however, are waved away by a campaign that finally found its voice with the slogan "Drill, baby, drill!"

The contrast between the candidates is even sharper with respect to the third branch of government. A tense equipoise currently prevails among the Justices of the Supreme Court, where four hard-core conservatives face off against four moderate liberals. Anthony M. Kennedy is the swing vote, determining the outcome of case after case.

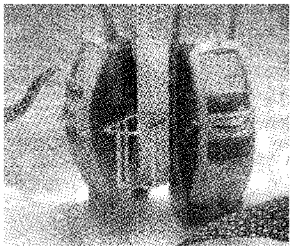
McCain cites Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito, two reliable conservatives, as models for his own prospective appointments. If he means what he says, and if he replaces even one moderate on the current Supreme Court, then Roe v. Wade will be reversed, and states will again be allowed to impose absolute bans on abortion. McCain's views have hardened on this issue. In 1999, he said he opposed overturning Roe; by 2006, he was saying that its demise "wouldn't bother me any"; by 2008, he no longer supported adding rape and incest as exceptions to his party's platform opposing abortion.

But scrapping Roe—which, after all, would leave states as free to permit abortion as to criminalize it—would be just the beginning. Given the ideological agenda that the existing conservative bloc has pursued, it's safe to predict that affirmative action of all kinds would likely be outlawed by a McCain Court. Efforts to expand executive power, which, in recent years, certain Justices have nobly tried to resist, would likely increase. Barriers between church and state would fall; executions would soar; legal checks on corporate power would wither—all with just one new conservative nominee on the Court. And the next President is likely to make three appointments.

Obama, who taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago, voted against confirming not only Roberts and Alito but also several unqualified lower-court nominees. As an Illinois state senator, he won the support of prosecutors and police organizations for new protections against convicting the innocent in capital cases. While McCain voted to continue to deny habeas-corpus rights to detainees, perpetuating the Bush Administration's regime of state-sponsored extra-legal detention, Obama took the opposite side, pushing to restore the right of all U.S.-held prisoners to a hearing. The judicial future would be safe in his care.

In the shorthand of political commentary, the Iraq war seems to leave McCain and Obama roughly even. Opposing it before the invasion, Obama had the prescience to warn of a costly and indefinite occupation and rising anti-American radicalism around the world; supporting it, McCain foresaw none of this. More recently, in early 2007 McCain risked his Presidential prospects on the proposition that five additional combat brigades could salvage a war that by then appeared hopeless. Obama, along with most of the country, had decided that it was time to cut American losses. Neither candidate's calculations on Iraq have been as cheaply political as McCain's repeated assertion that Obama values his career over his country; both men based their positions, right or wrong, on judgment and principle.

President Bush's successor will inherit two wars and the realities of limited resources, flagging popular will, and the dwindling possibilities of what can be achieved by American power. McCain's views on these subjects range from the simplistic to the unknown. In Iraq, he seeks "victory"—a word that General David Petraeus refuses to use, and one that fundamentally misrepresents the messy, open-ended nature of the conflict. As for Afghanistan, on the rare occasions when McCain mentions it he implies that the surge can be transferred directly from Iraq, which suggests that his grasp of counterinsurgency is not as firm as he insisted it was during the first Presidential debate. McCain always displays more faith in force than interest in its strategic consequences. Unlike Obama, McCain has no political strategy for either war, only the dubious hope that greater security will allow things to work out. Obama has long warned of deterioration along the



Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and has a considered grasp of its vital importance. His strategy for both Afghanistan and Iraq shows an understanding of the role that internal politics, economics, corruption, and regional diplomacy play in wars where there is no battlefield victory.

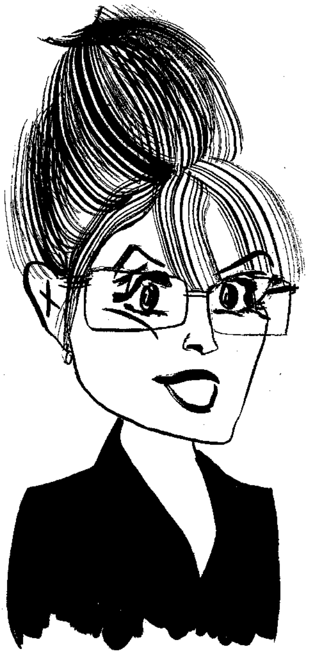
Unimaginably painful personal experience taught McCain that war is above all a test of honor: maintain the will to fight on, be prepared to risk everything, and you will prevail. Asked during the first debate to outline "the lessons of Iraq," McCain said, "I think the lessons of Iraq are very clear: that you cannot have a failed strategy that will then cause you to nearly lose a conflict." A soldier's answer—but a statesman must have a broader view of war and peace. The years ahead will demand not only determination but also diplomacy, flexibility, patience, judiciousness, and intellectual engagement. These are no more McCain's strong suit than the current President's. Obama, for his part, seems to know that more will be required than willpower and force to extract some advantage from the wreckage of the Bush years.

Obama is also better suited for the task of renewing the bedrock foundations of American influence. An American restoration in foreign affairs will require a commitment not only to international coöperation but also to international institutions that can address global warming, the dislocations of what will likely be a deepening global economic crisis, disease epidemics, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and other, more traditional security challenges. Many of the Cold War-era vehicles for engagement and negotiation—the United Nations, the World Bank, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—are moribund, tattered, or outdated. Obama has the generational outlook that will be required to revive or reinvent these compacts. He would be the first postwar American President unencumbered by the legacies of either Munich or Vietnam.

The next President must also restore American moral credibility. Closing Guantánamo, banning all torture, and ending the Iraq war as responsibly as possible will provide a start, but only that. The modern Presidency is as much a vehicle for communication as for decision-making, and the relevant audiences are global. Obama has inspired many Americans in part because he holds up a mirror to their own idealism. His election would do no less—and likely more—overseas.

What most distinguishes the candidates, however, is character—and here, contrary to conventional wisdom, Obama is clearly the stronger of the two. Not long ago, Rick Davis, McCain's campaign manager, said, "This election is not about issues. This election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates." The view that this election is about personalities leaves out policy, complexity, and accountability. Even so, there's some truth in what Davis said—but it hardly points to the conclusion that he intended.

Echoing Obama, McCain has made "change" one of his campaign mantras.

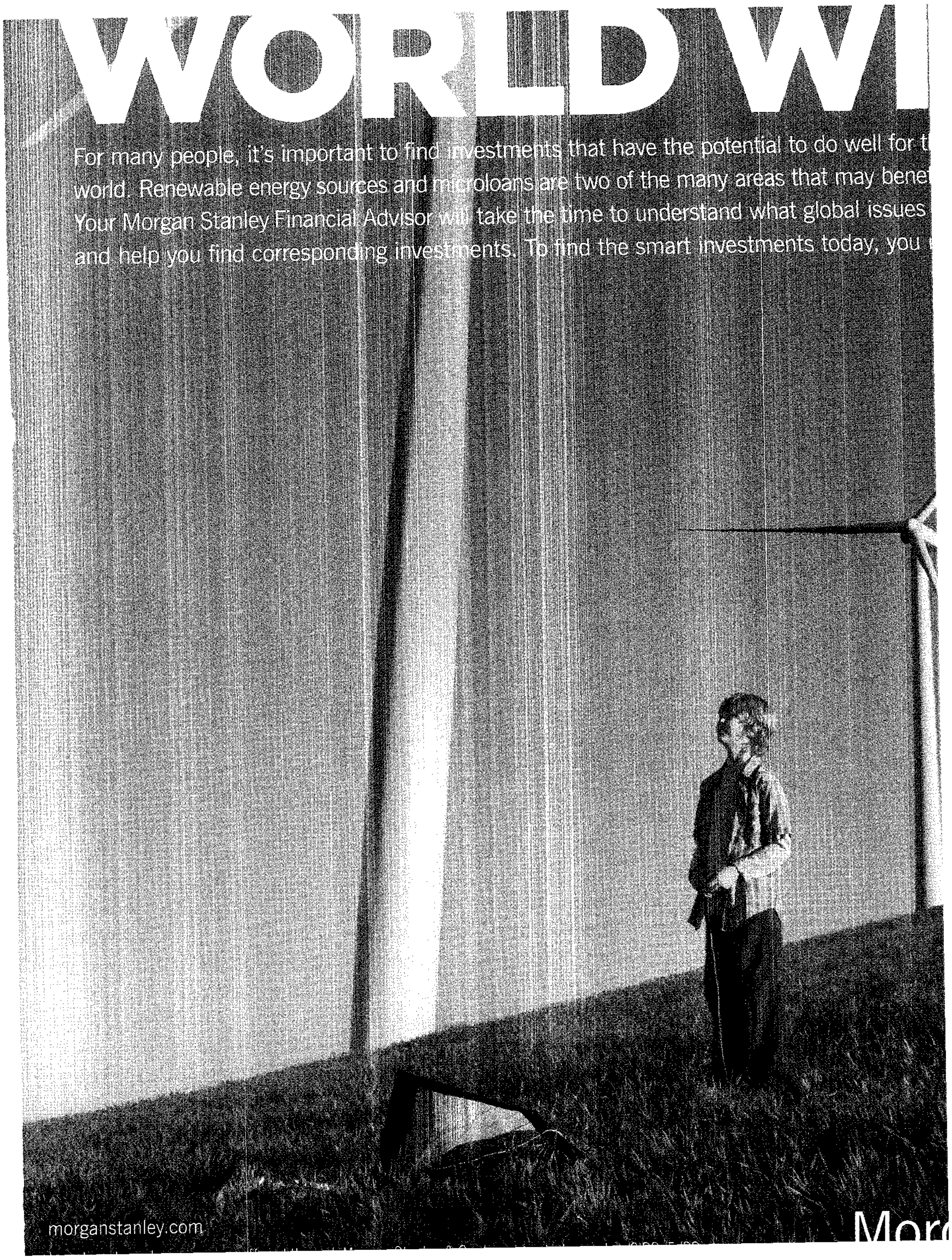


But the change he has actually provided has been in himself, and it is not just a matter of altering his positions. A willingness to pander and even lie has come to define his Presidential campaign and its televised advertisements. A contemptuous duplicity, a meanness, has entered his talk on the stump—so much so that it seems obvious that, in the drive for victory, he is willing to replicate some of the same underhanded methods that defeated him eight years ago in South Carolina.

Perhaps nothing revealed McCain's cynicism more than his choice of Sarah Palin, the former mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, who had been governor of that state for twenty-one months, as the Republican nominee for Vice-President. In the interviews she has given since her nomination, she has had difficulty uttering coherent unscripted responses about the most basic issues of the day. We are watching a candidate for Vice-President cram for her ongoing exam in elementary domestic and foreign policy. This is funny as a Tina Fey routine on "Saturday Night Live," but as a vision of the political future it's deeply unsettling. Palin has no business being the backup to a President of any age, much less to one who is seventy-two and in imperfect health. In choosing her, McCain committed an act of breathtaking heedlessness and irresponsibility. Obama's choice, Joe Biden, is not without imperfections. His tongue sometimes runs in advance of his mind, providing his own fodder for late-night comedians, but there is no comparison with Palin. His deep experience in foreign affairs, the judiciary, and social policy makes him an assuring and complementary partner for Obama.

The longer the campaign goes on, the more the issues of personality and character have reflected badly on McCain. Unless appearances are very deceiving, he is impulsive, impatient, self-dramatizing, erratic, and a compulsive risk-taker. These qualities may have contributed to his usefulness as a "maverick" senator. But in a President they would be a menace.

By contrast, Obama's transformative message is accompanied by a sense of pragmatic calm. A tropism for unity is an essential part of his character and of his campaign. It is part of what allowed him to overcome a Democratic opponent who entered the race with tremendous advantages. It is what helped him forge a political career relying both on the liberals of Hyde Park and on the political regulars of downtown Chicago. His policy preferences are distinctly liberal, but he is determined to speak to a broad range of Americans who do not necessarily share his every value or opinion. For some who oppose him, his



equanimity even under the ugliest attack seems like hauteur; for some who support him, his reluctance to counterattack in the same vein seems like self-defeating detachment. Yet it is Obama's temperament—and not McCain's—that seems appropriate for the office both men seek and for the volatile and dangerous era in which we live. Those who dismiss his centeredness as self-centeredness or his composure as indifference are as wrong as those who mistook Eisenhower's stolidity for denseness or Lincoln's humor for lack of seriousness.

Nowadays, almost every politician who thinks about running for President arranges to become an author. Obama's books are different: he wrote them. "The Audacity of Hope" (2006) is a set of policy disquisitions loosely structured around an account of his freshman year in the United States Senate. Though a campaign manifesto of sorts, it is superior to that genre's usual blowsy pastiche of ghostwritten speeches. But it is Obama's first book, "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance" (1995), that offers an unprecedented glimpse into the mind and heart of a potential President. Obama began writing it in his early thirties, before he was a candidate for anything. Not since Theodore Roosevelt has an American politician this close to the pinnacle of power produced such a sustained, highly personal work of literary merit before being definitively swept up by the tides of political ambition.

A Presidential election is not the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize: we elect a politician and, we hope, a statesman, not an author. But Obama's first book is valuable in the way that it reveals his fundamental attitudes of mind and spirit. "Dreams from My Father" is an illuminating memoir not only in the substance of Obama's own peculiarly American story but also in the qualities he brings to the telling: a formidable intelligence, emotional empathy, self-reflection, balance, and a remarkable ability to see life and the world through the eyes of people very different from himself. In common with nearly all other senators and governors of his generation, Obama does not count military service as part of his biography. But his life has been full of tests—personal, spiritual, racial, political—that bear on his preparation for great responsibility.

It is perfectly legitimate to call attention, as McCain has done, to Obama's lack of conventional national and international policymaking experience. We, too, wish he had more of it. But officeholding is not the only kind of experience relevant to the task of leading a wildly variegated nation. Obama's immersion in diverse human environments (Hawaii's racial rainbow, Chicago's racial cauldron, countercultural New York, middle-class Kansas, predominantly Muslim Indonesia), his years of organizing among the poor, his taste of corporate law and his grounding in public-interest and constitutional law—these, too, are experiences. And his books show that he has wrung from them every drop of insight and breadth of perspective they contained.

The exhaustingly, sometimes infuriatingly long campaign of 2008 (and 2007) has had at least one virtue: it has demonstrated that Obama's intelligence and steady temperament are not just figments of the writer's craft. He has made mistakes, to be sure. (His failure to accept McCain's imaginative proposal for a series of unmediated joint appearances was among them.) But, on the whole, his campaign has been marked by patience, planning, discipline, organization, technological proficiency, and strategic astuteness. Obama has often looked two or three moves ahead, relatively impervious to the permanent hysteria of the hourly news cycle and the cable-news shouters. And when crisis has struck, as it did when the divisive antics of his ex-pastor threatened to bring down his campaign, he has proved equal to the moment, rescuing himself with a speech that not only drew the poison but also demonstrated a profound respect for the electorate. Although his opponents have tried to attack him as a man of "mere" words, Obama has returned eloquence to its essential place in American politics. The choice between experience and eloquence is a false one—something that Lincoln, out of office after a single term in Congress, proved in his own campaign of political and national renewal. Obama's "mere" speeches on everything from the economy and foreign affairs to race have been at the center of his campaign and its success; if he wins, his eloquence will be central to his ability to govern.

We cannot expect one man to heal every wound, to solve every major crisis of policy. So much of the Presidency, as they say, is a matter of waking up in the morning and trying to drink from a fire hydrant. In the quiet of the Oval Office, the noise of immediate demands can be deafening. And yet Obama has precisely the temperament to shut out the noise when necessary and concentrate on the essential. The election of Obama—a man of mixed ethnicity, at once comfortable in the world and utterly representative of twenty-first century America—would, at a stroke, reverse our country's image abroad and refresh its spirit at home. His ascendance to the Presidency would be a symbolic culmination of the civil- and voting-rights acts of the nineteen-sixties and the century-long struggles for equality that preceded them. It could not help but say something encouraging, even exhilarating, about the country, about its dedication to tolerance and inclusiveness, about its fidelity, after all, to the values it proclaims in its textbooks. At a moment of economic calamity, international perplexity, political failure, and battered morale, America needs both uplift and realism, both change and steadiness. It needs a leader temperamentally, intellectually, and emotionally attuned to the complexities of our troubled globe. That leader's name is Barack Obama.

—*The Editors*

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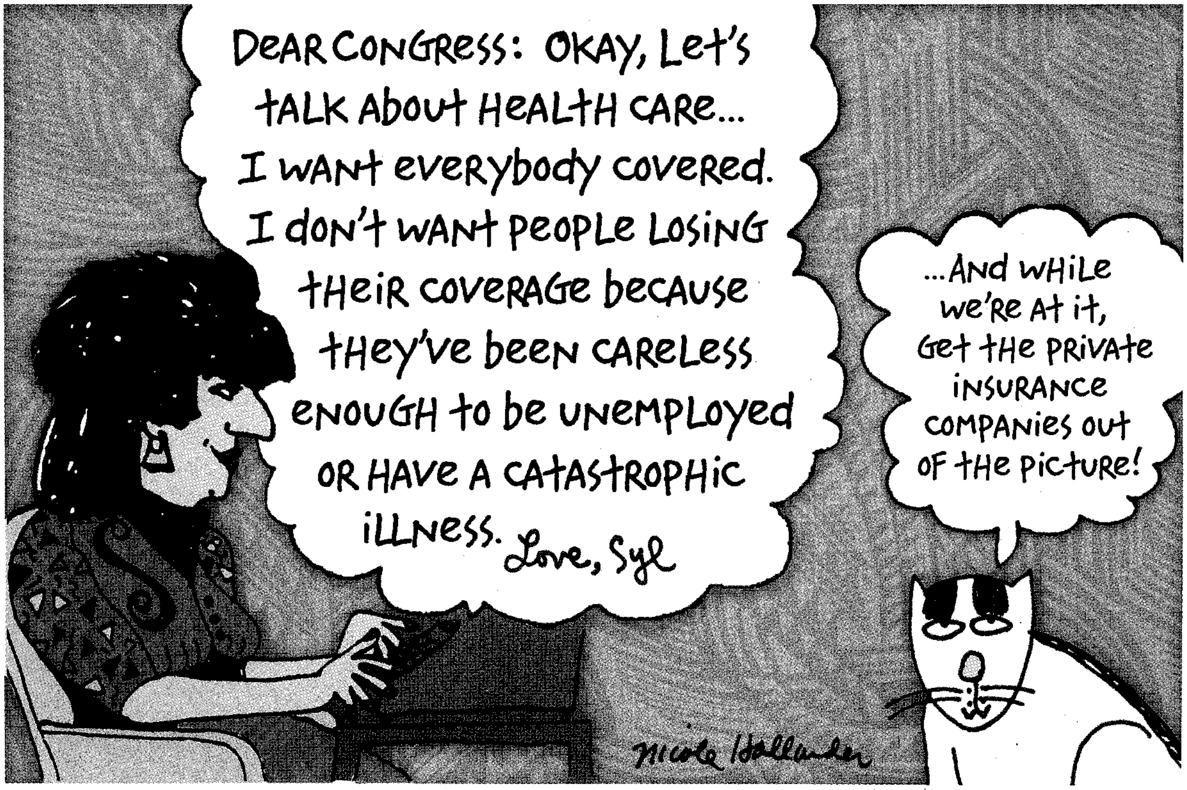
DEAR CONGRESS: OKAY, LET'S TALK ABOUT HEALTH CARE... I WANT EVERYBODY COVERED. I DON'T WANT PEOPLE LOSING THEIR COVERAGE BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN CARELESS ENOUGH TO BE UNEMPLOYED OR HAVE A CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS. Love, Syl
...AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, GET THE PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES OUT OF THE PICTURE!
Nicole Hollander

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Physicians to the candidates: Enact single-payer health reform

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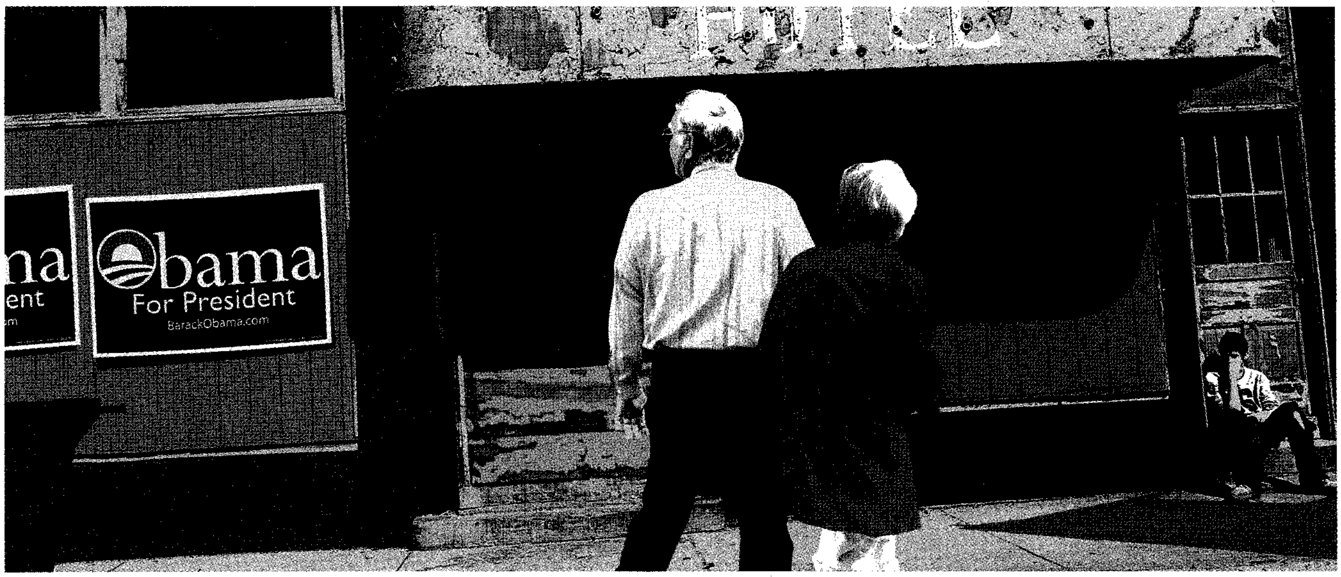
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE HARDEST VOTE

The disaffection of Ohio's working class.

BY GEORGE PACKER

Barbie Snodgrass had agreed to meet me at a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, on a strip of fast-food restaurants and auto shops west of downtown Columbus, Ohio, but she didn't have much time to talk. Her shift as a receptionist at a medical clinic, which got her out of the house at six in the morning, had just ended, at three; the drive home, to a housing development in a working-class suburb south of the city, took half an hour. She then had a little more than an hour to eat, change clothes, let the dog out, check up on her sister's two teen-age daughters—Sierra and Ashley, who were under her care—and then drive back into Columbus, where she worked the evening shift cleaning the studios of a local television station, and where her day ended, at ten. She also worked some weekends. She was forty-two, single, overweight, and suffering from stomach pains.



"You can't make the assumption that because people are suffering economically," a union official said, that "they'll vote Democratic."

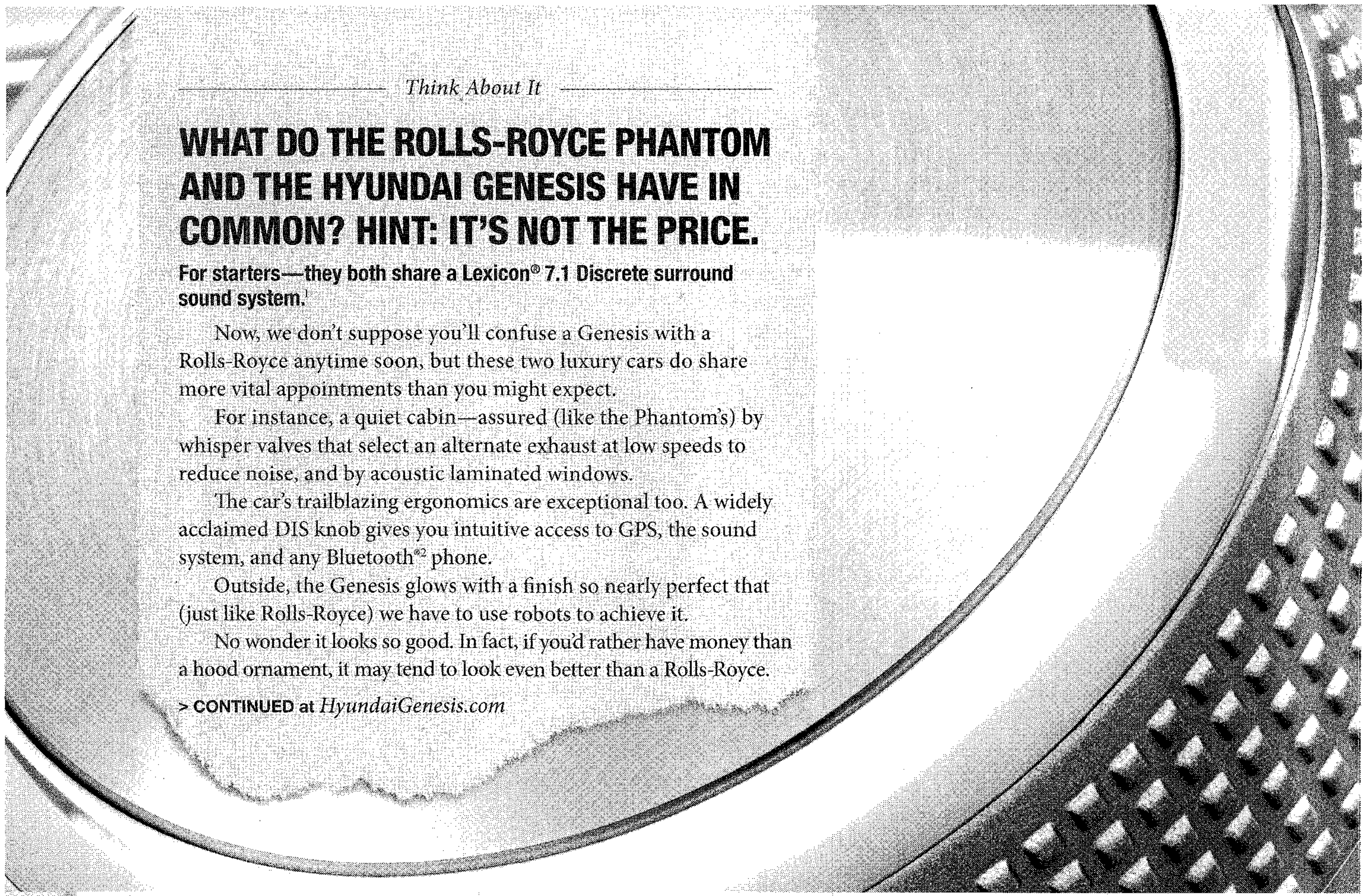
Snodgrass sat down at my table and refused the offer of a soft drink. She was wearing a drab ensemble of gray cotton sweatpants and a loose-fitting pale-yellow knit top, and her brown hair fell in bangs just above her eyes. I asked for her thoughts about the Presidential candidates, and she said, "Someone who makes two hundred or three hundred thousand a year, who eats a regular meal, who doesn't have to struggle, who doesn't worry if the lights are going to be turned out—if he doesn't walk in your shoes, he can't understand."

In Snodgrass's shoes, it hardly made sense to draw a paycheck. "You're working for what?" she asked. She hadn't finished college, and the two jobs that kept her "constantly moving" brought in a little more than forty thousand dollars a year, but after the mortgage (a thousand a month), car payments (three hundred and fifty), levies for supplies at the girls' public high school, fuel, electricity, stomach medicine, and a hundred dollars' worth of groceries each week (down from eight bags to four at Kroger's supermarket, because of inflation) there was basically nothing left to spend. She could cut corners—go out for a McDonald's Dollar Meal instead of spending seven dollars on a bag of potatoes and cooking at home. But that meant the end of any kind of family life for her nieces.

"These days, you have to struggle," she said. "As a kid, I used to be able to go to the movies or to the zoo. Now you can't take your children to the zoo or go to the movies, because you've got to think how you're going to put food on the table." Snodgrass's parents had raised four children on two modest incomes, without the ceaseless stress that she was enduring. But the two-parent family was now available only to the "very privileged." She said that she had ten good friends; eight of them were childless or, like her, unmarried with kids. "That's who's middle-class now," she said. "Two parents, two kids? That's over. People looked out for me. These kids nowadays don't have nobody to look out for them. You're one week away from (a) losing your job, or (b) not having a paycheck."

Snodgrass, who has always voted Democratic, was paying close attention to the Presidential campaign—she had taped both candidates' Convention speeches, and watched them when she had time—but her faith in politicians was somewhere close to zero. She wanted a leader who would watch out for people in the "middle class," people like her who had no one on their side. "I think McCain is going to be just like Bush the next eight years," she said. "I don't see how it's going to change." To her, Sarah Palin, a working mother close to her own age, felt more like a token choice than like a kindred spirit. "I think McCain picked her so women can relate to her, not because she's the

JOHN RITTER



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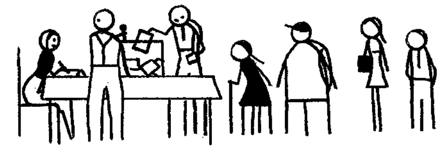
best person for the job," Snodgrass said. "She's more of a show for the American family." Hillary Clinton had been better, but even she couldn't fully apprehend Barbie Snodgrass's predicament.

She remained uninspired by Barack Obama. His Convention speech had gone into detail about his policy proposals on matters like the economy and health care, which seemed tailored to attract a voter like Snodgrass, but they filled her with suspicion. His promise to rescind the Bush tax cuts for wealthier Americans struck her as incredible: "How many people do *you* know who make two hundred and fifty thousand dollars? What is that, five per cent of the United States? That's a joke! If he starts at a hundred thousand, I might listen. Two hundred fifty—that's to me like people who hit the lottery." In fact, only two per cent of Americans make more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, but that group earns twelve per cent of the national income. Nonetheless, the circumstances of Snodgrass's life made it impossible for her to imagine that there could possibly be enough taxable money in Obama's upper-income category—which meant that he was being dishonest, and that she would eventually be the one to pay. "He'll keep going down, and when it's to people who make forty-five or fifty thousand it's going to hit me," she said. "I'd have to sell my home and live in a five-hundred-dollar-a-month apartment with gang bangers out in my yard, and I'd be scared to death to leave my house."

Snodgrass reacted with equal skepticism to Obama's proposal for expanding health care. "It scares the heck out of me," she said. "If the employers are going to cover more, we're going to get less in our raises. My raise every year is like a cost-of-living raise. How are they going to be able to give me more money?" The margin of error in her life was so slim, she felt, that any attempt to improve lives with ambitious new programs could only end up harming her. Obama's idealistic language left Snodgrass cold. "He's not saying to me how he's going to make *my* life better," she said. She wanted to hear exactly how the next President was going to remove some of the tremendous financial weight bearing down on her—reduce gas prices, cut the cost of medicine—not in the distant future but right away. A friend of hers who worked three jobs refused to support Obama on the theory that he was a Muslim, but Snodgrass said that it didn't matter to her what race or religion the next President was, nor did the ugly tactics of the campaign have any effect other than to disgust her. What mattered was "your daily life, your daily day, job, family, what you do that keeps you from robbing the video store down the street."

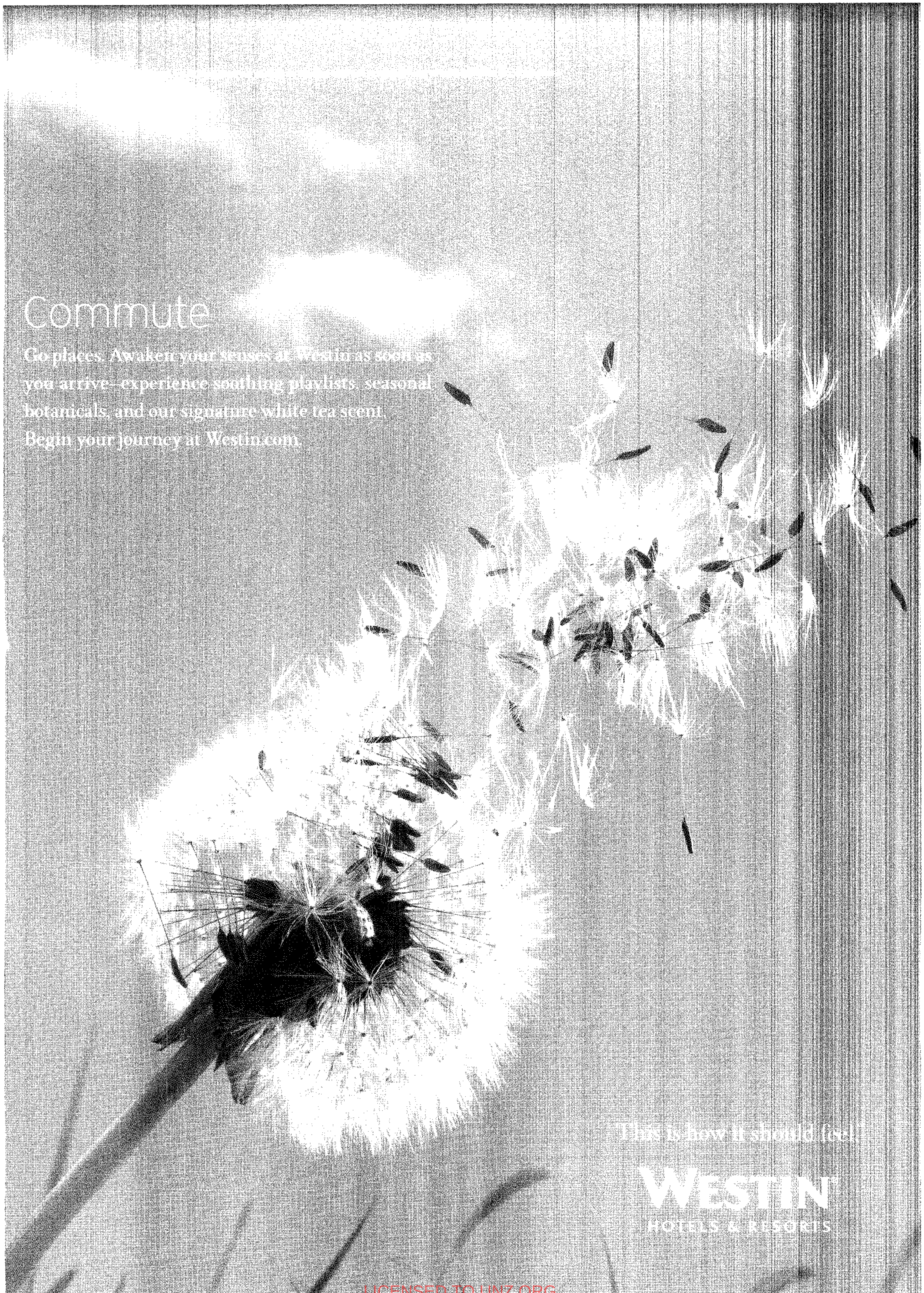
Snodgrass sat talking for much longer than she had initially offered; by the end, her words tumbled out in a plaintive rush, as if under some inner pressure. "You want somebody there who's going to take care of us," she said. "I'm very scared about who they put in there, because it's either going to get a lot worse than it is or it's going to keep going where it is, which is bad." She almost gasped. "Just give us a break. There's no reprieve. No reprieve."

Until the mid-seventies, the white working class—the heart of the New Deal coalition—voted largely Democratic. Since the Carter years, the percentages have declined from sixty to forty, and this shift has roughly coincided with the long hold of the Republican Party on the White House. The white working class—a group that often speaks of itself, and is spoken of, as forgotten, marginalized, even despised—is the golden key to political power in America, and it voted overwhelmingly for George W. Bush twice, by seventeen per cent in 2000 and twenty-three per cent in 2004. Thomas Frank's 2004 book "What's the Matter with Kansas?" directed its indignation at the baffling phenomenon of millions of Americans voting year after year against their economic self-interest. He concluded that the Republican Party had tricked working people with a relentless propaganda campaign based on religion and morality, while Democrats had abandoned these voters to their economic masters by moving to the soft center of the political spectrum. Frank's book remains the leading polemic about the white reaction—the title alone has, for many liberals, become shorthand for the conventional wisdom—but it is hobbled by the condescending argument that tens of millions of Americans have become victims of a "carefully cultivated derangement," or are simply stupid.



Last year, four sociologists at the University of Arizona, led by Lane Kenworthy, released a paper that complicates Frank's thesis. Their study followed the voting behavior of the forty-five per cent of white Americans who identify themselves as working class. Mining electoral data from the General Social Survey, they found that the decline in white working-class support for Democrats occurred in one period—from the mid-seventies until the early nineties, with a brief lull in the early eighties—and has remained well below fifty per cent ever since. But they concluded that social issues like abortion, guns, religion, and even (outside the South) race had little to do with the shift. Instead, according to their data, it was based on a judgment that—during years in which industrial jobs went overseas, unions practically vanished, and working-class incomes stagnated—the Democratic Party was no longer much help to them. "Beginning in the mid-to-late 1970s, there was increasing reason for working-class whites to question whether the Democrats were still better than the Republicans at promoting their material well-being," the study's authors write. Working-class whites, their fortunes falling, began to embrace the anti-government, low-tax rhetoric of the conservative movement. During Clinton's Presidency, the downward economic spiral of these Americans was arrested, but by then their identification with the Democrats had eroded. Having earlier moved to the right for economic reasons, the Arizona study concluded, the working class stayed there because of the rising prominence of social issues—Thomas Frank's argument. But the Democrats fundamentally lost the white working class because these voters no longer believed the Party's central tenet—that government could restore a sense of economic security.

Such a change in party allegiance across a vast section of the electorate takes decades to achieve, and to undo. But this year should mark the beginning of a reverse migration. When will the class war ever finally drown out the cul-



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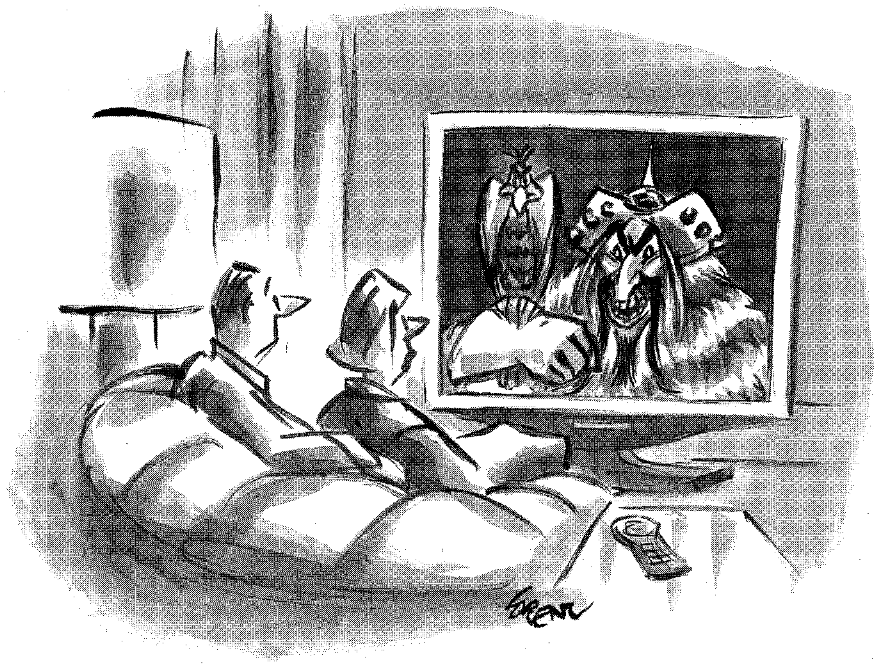


"I'm Vlad the Impaler, and I approved this message."

• •

ture war, if not in 2008? Under Republican rule in Washington, wages have stayed flat while income inequality has increased; the numbers of uninsured have soared; unemployment recently passed six per cent, its highest level since the early nineteen-nineties; gas and heating-oil prices have doubled, while basic food prices have gone up by fifty per cent; and the country's financial system has come closer to collapse than at any moment since 1929. More profoundly, Republican dogma no longer offers convincing solutions, and in some cases it doesn't even acknowledge the problems. (Income inequality has long been considered a nonissue in conservative free-market circles.) The question that Ronald Reagan asked voters to such devastating effect in 1980, when the white working class began turning away from Democrats—"Are you better off than you were four years ago?"—should, in theory, produce an equal and opposite effect this year.

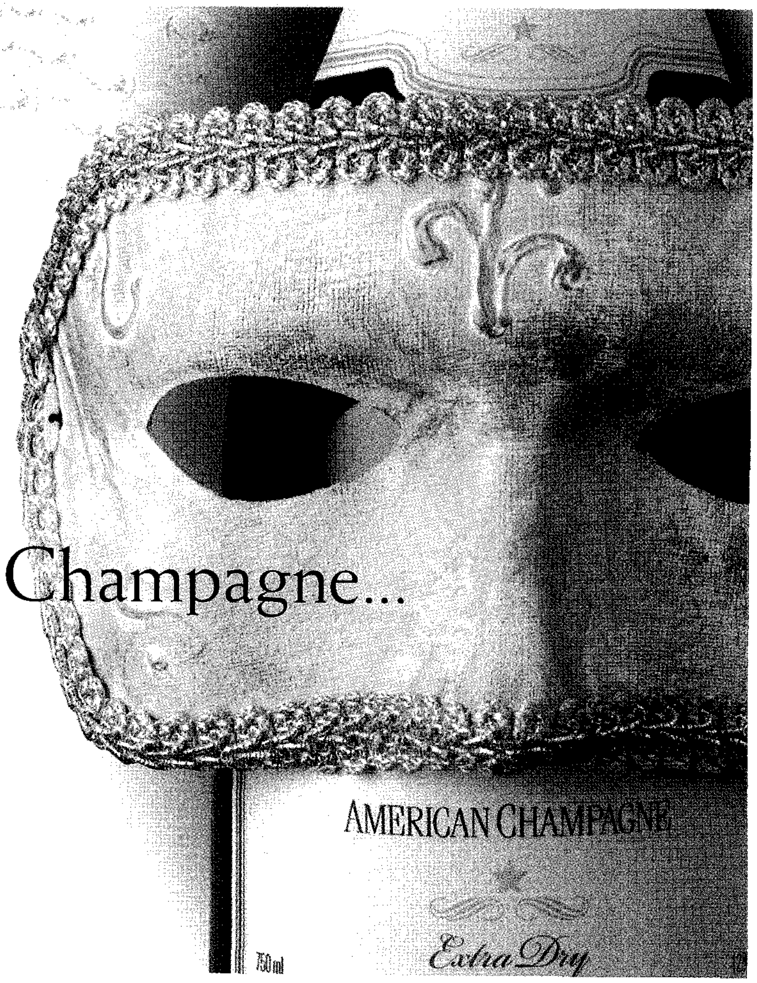
This is particularly true in big, aging, economically battered swing states like Michigan, where unemployment is nearly nine per cent, and Ohio, where residents told me that a whole generation of young people is leaving the state to seek higher education and work elsewhere. A man in Brown County, along the Ohio River, in the southwestern part of the state, said that a year ago there was one foreclosure notice in the local paper each week; now the number is six or eight, and the listings for the week of September 12th announced fifty-three foreclosure sales in a county with only fifteen thousand households. In the town of Wilmington, outside Dayton, a D.H.L. facility with eight thousand workers—a third of the area's population—is likely to close. On September 9th, the day I flew into Cincinnati, a woman named Marla Bell, attending an Obama rally near Dayton, told National Public Radio, "It almost feels like it's a dying state."

The next day, Governor Ted Strickland, a Democrat who remains popular in Ohio, announced a budget shortfall that would require painful spending cuts across the board. The state's budget director, Pari Sabety, told me, "There are a lot more part-time jobs, jobs without benefits, jobs that require a broader social safety net than we currently have. We are not creating high-value jobs at a rate that can absorb people who are losing high-value jobs of the old economy." The economic crisis, she went on, is so grave that it has created room for a renewed discussion about the role of government in people's lives. "Here's the opportunity before us. What's happening is a slow-motion Katrina to economies like ours. I feel like we are where F.D.R. was."

Obama has had particular trouble with the prized demographic group that once delivered the Presidency to Roosevelt and his successors. Anecdotally, and in polls, unusually large numbers of working-class voters seem to remain undecided or determined to sit the election out, as if they couldn't bring themselves to vote Republican this year but couldn't fathom taking a chance on Obama. Roger Catt, a retired farmer and warehouse worker, who lives in a small town near Eau Claire, Wisconsin, characterized the choice this way: "McCain is more of the same, and Obama is the end of life as we know it."

Gloria Fauss, the longtime political director in Ohio for the Service Employees International Union, or S.E.I.U., which backs Obama, said, "I'm very worried. The conventional wisdom is that the economy will trump this year. I'm not so sure. The economy may override social issues this year and people still might not vote for Obama." Fauss has spent years studying the results of polls and focus groups among Ohio voters, and she has learned that judgments about character and values can be decisive even among those who rate jobs and health care as more important than abortion. "You can't make the assumption that because people are suffering economically and the last eight years have been downhill and things are very bleak for them—you can't make the assumption they'll vote Democratic. There's just no basis for that."

Obama understands that he is an imperfect vehicle for an already difficult message. In April, at the San Francisco fund-raiser where he damaged himself with working-class whites by delivering a speech connecting their "bitter" outlook to guns, religion, bigotry, and xenophobia, Obama also described the situation of voters like Barbie Snodgrass acutely. "In a lot of these communities in big industrial states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, people have been beaten down so long," he said. "They feel so betrayed by government that when they hear a pitch that is premised on *not* being cynical about government, then a part of them just doesn't buy it. And when it's delivered by—it's true that when it's delivered



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by a forty-six-year-old black man named Barack Obama, then that adds another layer of skepticism."

During the first Presidential debate, Obama spoke directly to "middle-class" economic anxieties several times, and he later attacked McCain for never even using the word. But Obama's middle class has no face, no name, no story. Even as he becomes more specific on policy, partly in response to criticism, he still has trouble making a human connection. Bill Clinton could always employ the drawl and roguish charm of Bubba to let the working class know he was one of them, but Obama's life story is based on upward mobility, on transcending his complex origins. There's no readily apparent cultural identity he can fall back on—no folksy or streetwise manner he can assume—that won't threaten more white voters than it attracts.

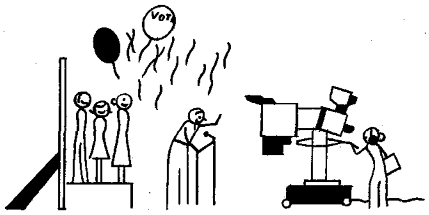
Gabe Kramer, the S.E.I.U.'s chief of staff in Columbus, told me, "You talk to people about the issues and the issues resonate. But what you hear people talking about on the street and on TV and radio is the other things. Is Obama like us? Does Obama share our experience of the world? Which is not the same thing as racism, but overlaps with it." Obama, Kramer added, is "very good at talking to professionals—people who care about policy—and comes across as judicious, careful, thoughtful. But he has a harder time talking about them in a way working-class white Ohioans can relate to."

Glouster, a coal-mining town with a population of fewer than two thousand (and falling), lies hidden amid the gentle slopes and thick woods of southeastern Ohio's Appalachian hills. If the state is dying, Glouster was long ago left for dead. Over the past few decades, it has lost its Baptist church, grocery store, railroad depot, parking meters, four car dealerships, ten of its dozen bars, and—crucially—all but one of its deep mines. It's become the kind of town where several generations of white families live on welfare, and marijuana is the local cash crop. I was given a tour by Bob Cotter, who is seventy-four, and Pete Morris, seventy-one, both retired from the post office. We walked in a warm drizzle along Main Street, which was nearly deserted, with a few parked cars and no pedestrians. Half the storefronts were shuttered, although a local citizens' group had arranged hand-painted furniture and traditional quilts in the show windows of some of the vacant stores. It looked as if nothing had been built since the fifties. In the middle of town stood a prominent three-story brick building with the words "Sam & Ellen's Wonder Bar—Home of the 'Wonder Dog'" painted across an exposed side. Morris had once owned the bar before selling it to his cousin, in 1971; now it was boarded up. Farther down the street, a hotel, a restaurant, and a two-lane bowling alley had been demolished, leaving a weed-strewn lot.

Every morning at seven, Cotter and Morris had coffee at Bonnie's Home Cooking, on Main Street across from the gas station. The menu was scrawled in Magic Marker across a whiteboard, and almost nothing cost more than five dollars. On the morning I visited, a dozen men and women came in for their coffee and eggs. One of them, a retired union coal miner, was identified to me as if he were a rare species of bird. Three people, including Morris, expressed reluctant support for Obama. The nine or ten others were roughly split between voting McCain or sitting it out.

Dave Herbert was a stocky, talkative building contractor in an Ohio State athletic jersey. At thirty-eight, he considerably lowered the average age in Bonnie's. "I'm self-employed," he said. "I can't afford to be a Democrat." Herbert was a devoted viewer of Fox News and talked in fluent sound bites about McCain's post-Convention "bounce" and Sarah Palin's "executive experience." At one point, he had doubted that Obama stood a chance in Glouster. "From Bob and Pete's generation there are a lot of racists—not out-and-out, but I thought there was so much racism here that Obama'd never win." Then he heard a man who freely used the " 'n' word" declare his support for Obama: "That blew my theory out of the water."

A maintenance man at the nearby high school, who declined to give his name, said that he had been undecided until McCain selected Palin to be his running mate, which swung his support to Obama.



"So you're a sexist more than a racist," Herbert joked.

"I just think the guy Obama picked would do better if he got assassinated than McCain's if he died of frickin' old age in office," the maintenance man said.

Four women of retirement age were sitting at the next table. All of them spoke warmly of Palin. "She'd fit right in with us," Greta Jennice said. "We should invite her over." None had a good word to say about Obama. "I think he's a radical," a white-haired woman who wouldn't give her name said. "The church he went to, the people he associated with. You don't see the media digging into that."

"I don't know anyone who's for Obama," said Jennice, a Democrat who supported Hillary Clinton and who won't vote in November.

"If they are, they don't say it, because it would be unpopular," an elderly former teacher named Marcella said. That had not been true of Bill Clinton, Al Gore, or John Kerry, she added.

"I think the party-line Democrats are having a hard time with Obama," Bobbie Dunham, a retired fourth-grade teacher, told me. When I asked if Obama's health-care plan wouldn't be a good thing for people in Glouster, she said, "I'll believe it when I see it. If it's actually happening, I'd say that's good." But she and the others had far more complaints about locals freeloading off public assistance than about the health-insurance industry and corporations. Dunham declared her intention to write in a vote for either Snoopy or T. Boone Pickens. "I'm not going to vote for a Republican—they've had their chance for the last eight years and they've screwed it up," she said. "But I really just don't trust Obama. He only says half-truths. He calls himself a Christian, but he only became one to run for office. He calls himself a black, but he's two-thirds Arab."

I asked where she had learned that.

"On the Internet."

In 2002, John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira published "The Emerging Democratic Majority," a prophecy of Democratic political success based on the growing electoral clout of professionals,

August 3, 2029

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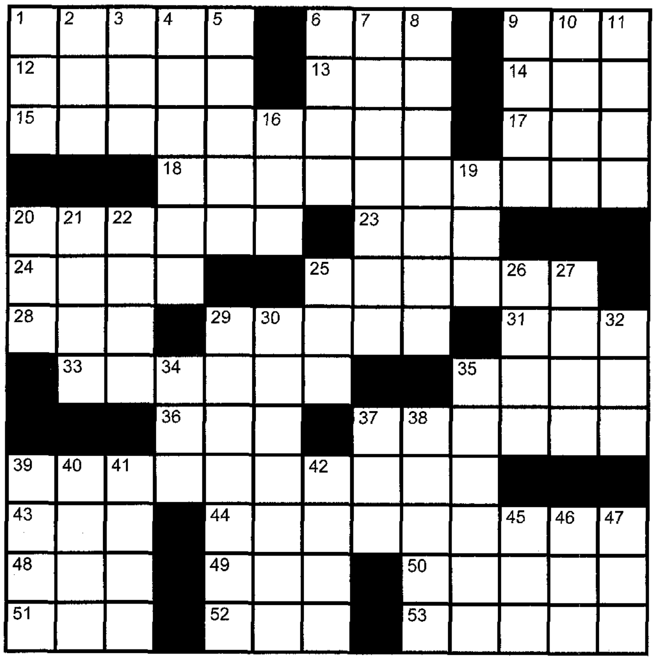
ACROSS

1. Confederate Army's were gray
6. "Rec" add-on (congressional break)
9. Conservative states on the map
12. Where President Ford was born
13. Yellowknife's locale, for short
14. Prefix to "ate" (make effervescent)
15. Obama or McCain title
17. Nickname of 1950s president
18. Lincoln believed secession went against it: 2 wds.
20. November 4, 2008, balloters
23. Informal add-on for "Ron" (President Reagan to Nancy)
24. Ship's figurehead site
25. "That regiment of coal __" (how the 48th PA Infantry was known in the Civil War)
28. "Dom" in "freedom," for short
29. At the start of Election Day, a polling station ___
31. Gettysburg fragment: "__fathers brought forth... a new nation."
33. World leaders' meeting
35. Miss Todd (later Mrs. Abe)
36. Phone's alphabetic trio for No. 6
37. 41st and 43rd presidents' first name
39. For financial solutions, ___ ___.
43. Gran_ (what #47-Down sculpture is carved from)
44. Battle of __ Creek, a.k.a. Battle of Mechanicsville



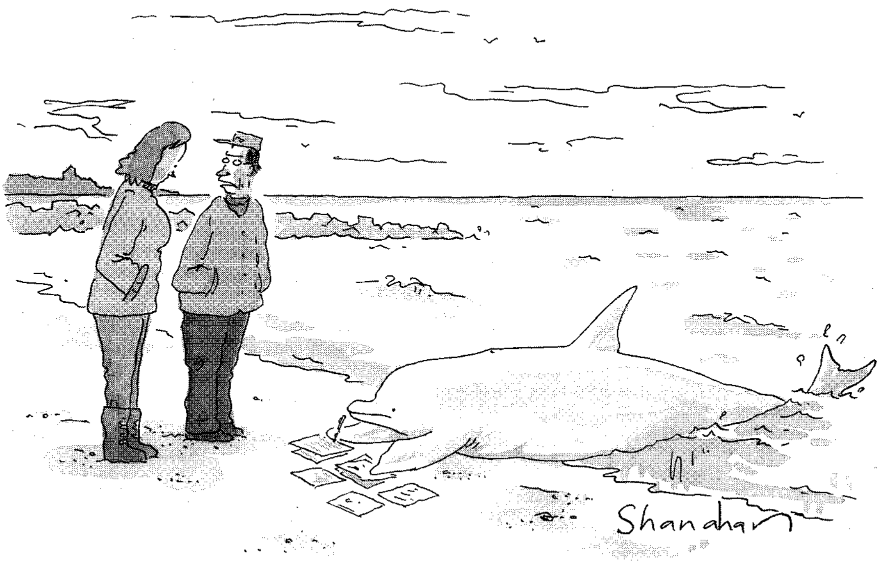
48. Forty winks in Lincoln Bedroom
49. About-face on an issue, in slang
50. Legal locale
51. Jackie O's hubby
52. Some surname appendages [abbr.]
53. U.S. presidential runs

DOWN

1. Tip to "rage" (bravery)
2. Mantric syllables
3. Some small batteries
4. Marines, ___. The Proud.
5. Having more sound judgment
6. "Dét" add-on (possible diplomatic result)
7. On January 20, 2009, a new president will be___
8. Tries harder
9. __ Splitter (lesser-known Lincoln nickname)
10. "__! _ mouse!" (rodent-spotter's squeal)
11. Attracted, such as supporters to campaign rallies
16. Political promos
19. Confederate General
20. FDR's were Garner, Wallace, and Truman
21. "It's either them __!" (Make a choice!)
22. Vegan protein source
25. Gathered
26. Crowd's thunderous response
27. ___. General (public-health head nom. by President)
29. Motto of Washington, D.C., "*Justitia* _____"
30. ___settlers of Kentucky
32. Whiskey grain or deli bread
34. Roman numeral for 2050
35. ___ Doctrine
37. Statehouse VIP, briefly
38. President-___ (title before swearing in)
39. Barack's birth-state motto: *"Ua mau ke ea o ka ___ i ka pono."* ("The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.")
40. Silver__ (one medal awarded to McCain post-Vietnam)
41. Military cap
42. Small islands
45. How long something lasts, for short
46. Build up
47. Rushmore, et al. [abbr.]

THE LINCOLN FINANCIAL GROUP CROSSWORD CHALLENGE RULES AND REGULATIONS
NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.

1. This challenge starts October 6, 2008, 12:01 A.M. ET, and ends 12:00 A.M. ET, November 3, 2008. Each individual crossword contest will last a month from issue newsstand date.
2. Contestants may enter the contest by correctly completing and submitting the Lincoln Financial Group crossword via mail, or by submitting a photocopy thereof found in the October 13, 2008, issue of *The New Yorker*. Contestants must include name, address, telephone, and e-mail address in the envelope addressed to The New Yorker Promotion Department, attn: "Ask Lincoln," 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036. Contestants may also enter online at www.futuresweeps.com.
3. Prize description as noted above or visit www.futuresweeps.com for more information.
4. One camera will be given away for each of the series' three remaining crossword challenges.
5. This sweepstakes (the "Promotion") is only open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia who are at least 18 years old as of the date of entry, except officers, directors, members, and employees of the Sponsor, the judging organization (if applicable), or any other party associated with the development or administration of this Promotion, and their immediate family (*i.e., parents, children, siblings, spouse*), *and persons residing in the same household as such individuals.* Lincoln Financial Group affiliates and their respective employees/representatives are not eligible to win prizes from this sweepstakes. This Promotion is void outside the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, and where prohibited.
6. One entry per challenge per household for each of the Lincoln Financial Group Crossword contests.
7. For complete contest rules, visit www.futuresweeps.com, and again after November 10th for puzzle solution.



"If he was really intelligent, he wouldn't limit his applications to East Coast schools."

minorities, young people, and women. Although they emphasized that the Democrats couldn't ignore the white working class, they were essentially sketching a new politics that could win without it.

Yet during the long Democratic primary fight it was precisely the white working class that kept denying Obama a lock on the nomination. The problem first became manifest in New Hampshire, a state that much of the media declared in advance to be the end of the road for Clinton. Two days after her victory, Andrew Kohut, of the Pew Research Center, published an Op-Ed in the *Times* about the failure of polls to predict the outcome. He had a theory: undetected racism among working-class whites. Clinton, he noted, beat Obama among whites with family incomes under fifty thousand dollars and also among those who hadn't attended college. "Poorer, less well-educated white people refuse surveys more often than affluent, better-educated whites," Kohut wrote. "Polls generally adjust their samples for this tendency. But here's the problem: these whites who do not respond to surveys tend to have more unfavorable views of blacks than respondents who do the interviews." This statistical glitch is different from the Bradley Effect, named for the black mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley, who lost the California governorship in 1982 despite polls that had showed him in the lead, apparently because a small percentage of respondents would rather lie to a pollster than admit to opposing a candidate on the ground of his race. Still, the Bradley Effect and the Kohut Lacuna produce the same conclusion: a black candidate is likely to fare worse than preëlection polls would suggest.

By the spring, after Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania, polls showed Obama getting trounced two-to-one or more among less-educated, lower-income whites. The numbers were so stark that they inspired Clinton—whom conservative pundits had long condemned as a symbol of everything hateful to red-state America—to make herself over into a shot-and-a-beer gal. Even when Obama's eventual victory seemed certain, he was crushed by forty-one and thirty-five percentage points in West Virginia and Kentucky—unheard-of margins for the party front-runner late in the primaries. By then, his campaign had begun to change its tactics, making the candidate's oratory less lofty and putting him among smaller groups, in bowling alleys and veterans' halls.

Yet the resistance remained. In April, I travelled to Inez, a town in eastern Kentucky, where McCain was scheduled to speak at the county courthouse. Afterward, I noticed a group of Clinton supporters holding signs across the tiny town's main road, next to the Straight Talk Express. I approached a man wearing a button that said "Hillary: Smart Choice." He was a retired state employee named J. K. Patrick.

"East of Lexington, she'll carry seventy per cent of the primary vote," Patrick said. "She could win the general election in Kentucky. Obama couldn't win." Why not? "Race. I've talked to people—a woman who helped run county elections last year. She said she wouldn't vote for a black man." He added, "There's a lot of white people that just wouldn't vote for a colored person. Especially older people." Indeed, no one among the two dozen people I talked to in Inez would even consider voting for Obama. His name often evoked a sharp racial hostility that was expressed without hesitation or apology.

These were not views that many Americans had been willing to reveal to reporters. For obvious reasons, neither Obama nor McCain wants to address the conjunction of race and class in this election. The national press corps—which more and more confines its political coverage to politicians, campaign officials, strategists, and itself—has often discussed the role of race in the campaign, but the conversation is inevitably softened by euphemism. Americans accustomed to discussing race politely, or not at all, might follow the campaign without a real sense of the potency of skin color.

Patrick himself feared that Obama's race would threaten his own security and well-being. He said that it would be only natural for a black President to avenge the historical wrongs that his people had suffered at the hands of whites. "I really don't want an African-American as President," he said. "I think he would put too many minorities in positions over the white race. That's my opinion."

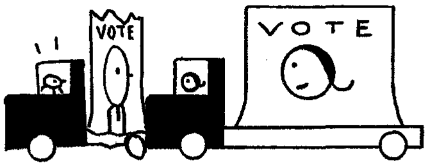
Trade unionists in the Obama campaign know better than anyone that their candidate is not an easy sell with the working class, including some of their own members. This summer, the Wisconsin A.F.L.-C.I.O. sent out a brochure offering "Straight Answers to Real Questions . . . About Barack Obama": Is he a Christian? Was he sworn in on the Bible? Was he born in America? Does he place his hand over his heart when he says the pledge? The S.E.I.U., whose membership includes prison workers, put out a flyer in Ohio that insisted, "Barack Obama Won't Take Away Your Gun . . . but John McCain Will Take Away Your Union."

Lisa Hetrick, a registered nurse and the secretary-treasurer at the S.E.I.U.'s regional headquarters in Columbus, fumed that her son was supporting McCain because of national security, and that her husband was wobbling because of firearms. Like everyone else at the office, Hetrick had a story about a racist colleague, relative, or friend. "Oh God, it's terrible," she said. "I don't know what we're going to do! They're rednecks." She mentioned a prison worker and union member down in Chillicothe who, four years ago, had berated her for not enlisting him and his colleagues to volunteer for Kerry; when she made sure to call him this time, he told her that he wouldn't work for Obama, and she understood the reason to be race.

Hetrick put me in touch with Tom Guyer, Jr., a parole officer in Lorain, on Lake Erie. A Democrat with "Republican views" about some issues and a fondness for Bill O'Reilly, Guyer confessed to being undecided. He had no enthusiasm for McCain or Palin, but, he said, "The more I hear about Obama and some of his—I don't know if character is the right way to describe it, but maybe he's not ready to lead." This idea had been the theme of McCain's August campaign ads. Guyer brought up something that he had just heard on the radio. Three days earlier, on September 7th, in an interview with George Stephanopoulos on the ABC program "This Week," Obama had said, "You're absolutely right that John McCain has not talked about my Muslim faith." From the context, it was clear that Obama was simply compressing "the idea that my faith is Muslim" into fewer words, but for anyone already harboring doubts the phrase was suspect, and Guyer wondered why Obama would say such a thing.

One evening, in the basement of S.E.I.U. headquarters, I met a group of members—nursing-home workers, janitors, hospital staff—who had just returned from canvassing unionists door to door in mixed-race Columbus neighborhoods. Their score had been encouraging: out of a hundred and six contacts that day, sixty-nine had been solidly for Obama and only seven solidly against. They told me that race hardly ever came up, but other sensitive matters that might stand in for race sometimes did. Jacynth Stewart, a Caribbean-born woman who had come from New York, where she is a food-service worker at Beth Israel Medical Center, to help the Ohio campaign, encountered one woman who believed that Obama was Muslim. "Didn't you see 'Obama Revealed' on CNN Sunday night?" Stewart asked, and then she explained Obama's life story—the Kenyan father he hardly knew, the white mother from Kansas. After ten minutes, the woman at the door declared that she would vote for Obama. Another woman had read in a mass e-mail that Obama wouldn't allow the American flag to be displayed on the tail of Air Force One. She was harder to win over.

In the static-filled bedlam of viral e-mails, cable-news square-offs, mangled media clips, fake-news Web sites, political ads, and malicious rumors, with a new lie popping up somewhere every hour, the Obama campaign faces the nearly impossible task of putting out stories before they spread across a political landscape that is often dry tinder for them. In Eau Claire, Tom Giffey, the editorial-page editor at the *Leader-Telegram*, described the profusion of cut-and-paste e-mails that his page has received during the campaign. "In the old days, there were Republican or Democratic newspapers, but there was more of a level playing field and both sides had to argue from the same facts," Giffey said. "Now we're in an age when you can simply reinforce your own viewpoints. And it's hard to have a discussion of the facts when you're dealing with two separate sets of facts—two sets of talking points that came down from on high. With the Internet, all of us were going to be content producers, but it's become an echo chamber."



As Dave Herbert, the building contractor at Bonnie's Home Cooking, put it, "Partisanship has crept into every crease in this country." In 2008, a customer at a breakfast spot in Appalachia, or a worker at a union office in Columbus, is able to repeat the latest dubious campaign sound bites within days, if not hours. Everyone hates the media, and everyone sounds like a talking head.

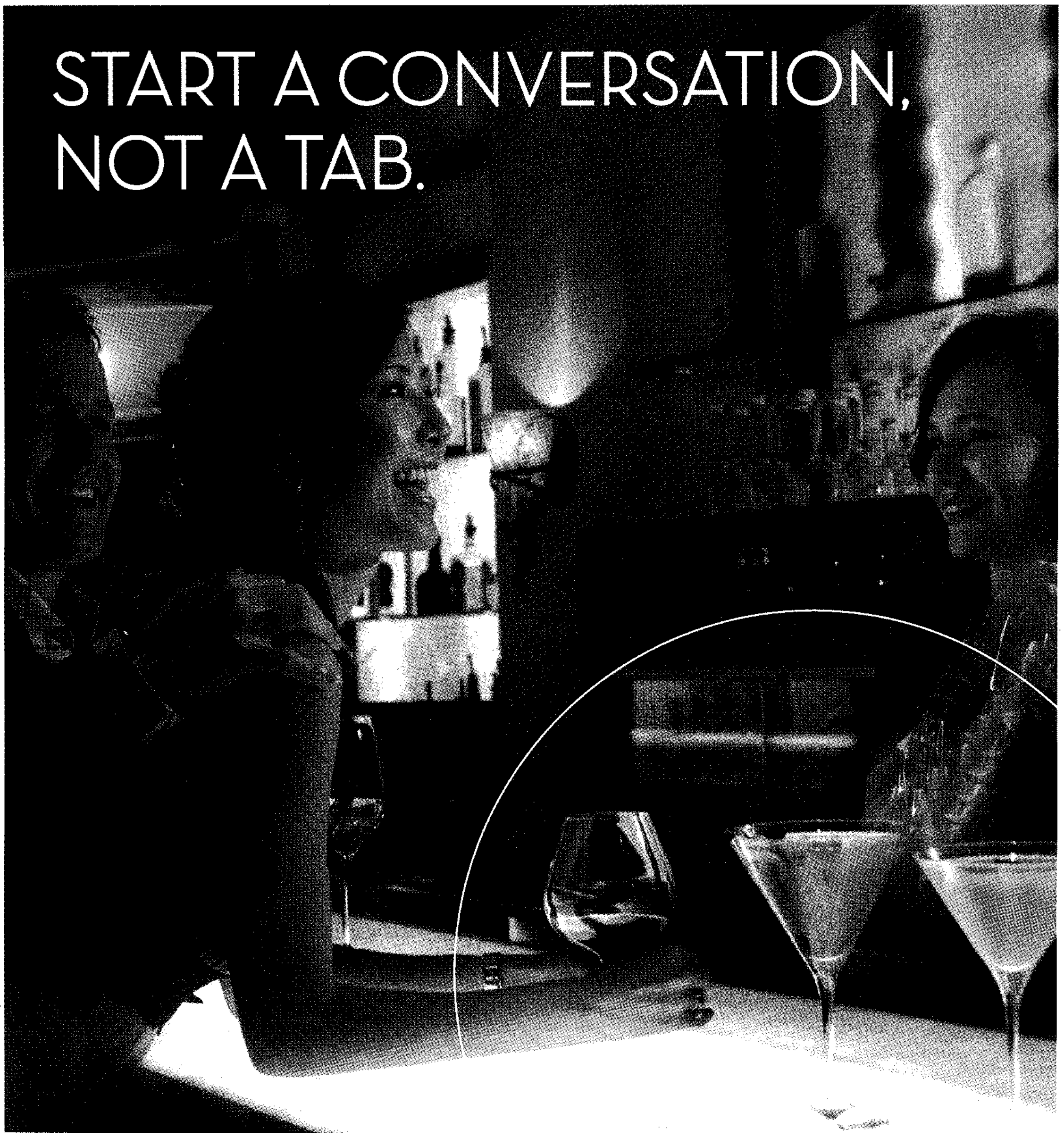
One night in Glouster, sixteen people gathered in the modest living room of an elderly woman named Helen Walker, whom everyone called Babe. Walker had invited her friends and neighbors over to meet the Obama organizer in the area—a young woman from Arizona named Kristin Gwinn. It was clear that not all of the guests were wholeheartedly committed to the cause. Pete Morris was there because Bob Cotter had asked him to come, and Bob Cotter was there because Babe Walker had asked him to explain to the organizer why he wouldn't vote in November.

"I think the Democratic Party has kind of walked away from me," Cotter said. The issue that had alienated him from his party was its refusal to take a strong stand against illegal immigration. "It is not just Obama," he went on. "The élite of the Democratic Party, the Kennedys, the Clintons, they're pushing this thing." Cotter had contacted everyone from Howard Dean, the Democratic Party chairman, to the Athens County Democratic Party about the cost of illegal immigration to the country, without satisfaction: "Hell, nobody cares."

Gwinn, the organizer, responded earnestly, "The fact that there are two hundred staffers like me out here having this conversation with you means somebody cares. And I'll have this conversation with you every day, if you want."

Cotter said that abstaining in November still felt like his most potent option. "How are we going to get them to pay attention to us, if we don't send a message?" he asked.

Travis Post, a gangly twenty-two-year-old, mentioned that he had worked with immigrants on a landscaping crew. "These are human beings you're talking about," he said. "They come here and work hard seeking a better life just like



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our ancestors did. For us just to send them back? That'll never work."

"There are a lot of other things affecting your friends and neighbors here in Glouster," the organizer told Cotter. "If people who typically vote Democratic don't vote at all, we're handing this election to John McCain."

"I sent three letters to Howard Dean," Cotter said. They had gone unanswered. "The Party wants my money and my vote. After that, they don't care. I think the Democrats are walking away from us people here." Illegal immigrants were rare in southeast Ohio, a sort of phantom menace; Cotter's awareness of the issue had mainly come through the media. Cotter, a mild, self-deprecating man, said with a chuckle, "I'm going to vote for Lou Dobbs, that's who I'm going to vote for. Anyway, that's my view. Maybe I'm just a turd in the punch bowl tonight."

Later, Cotter told me that he was a lifelong Democrat. "I do have liberal views," he said. "I think one of these days health care is going to have to be covered by the government. None of us want to see somebody lying out on the curb dying. Hillary was ahead of her time." He had grown up on stories of how the New Deal had saved his family, who were miners. "I can remember the hard times, I can remember the things the Democrats have done for the working people. I can remember when rent was ten dollars a month and my parents lay awake in bed wondering how we were going to pay for it. Where do people like me go? I don't think anybody cares what we think. I just wish our party would pay more attention to people down here in the grass roots."

As the guests drank sodas and ate pigs in a blanket in Babe Walker's living room, Gwinn asked for volunteers to make phone calls and go door to door. There were not many takers. "Local validators are very important," she said, with urgency. "A lot of people are secretly for Barack, but they're afraid to go public. You know everyone in this town. So if there's anybody out there with misinformation, you have to find them and say, 'It's not true. He's not a Muslim.'" Seeing an Obama sign in a neighbor's yard could make a huge difference in a place like Glouster, she said.

As I drove around southern Ohio, I saw only half a dozen Obama yard signs. Some people told me that the campaign's state headquarters had been slow to get them out to the far-flung counties; it was as if they were afraid that the signs would be torn down or defaced.

Babe Walker agreed to make phone calls, as long as she didn't have to say "ratty things" about McCain.

"Barack's father was from where? Kenya?" a seventy-one-year-old woman named Karla Cominsky suddenly asked. "Would that be any part of the world that was part of slavery?"

Gwinn explained that Obama had grown up mainly in Hawaii.

"My great-great-grandfather and grandmother came here from Morgan County," Cominsky continued. "And guess who they brought with them? A little slave girl named Dinah. She was buried in the family plot. They felt she was one of the family."

A campaign intern from Ohio University, in the nearby town of Athens, explained, "Most slaves came from western Africa, where the ships could just take them and go. Kenya's from the eastern part."

There was an awkward silence: the point of the woman's story had not been immediately clear. Afterward, it occurred to me that this was how people in towns like Glouster were accustoming themselves to the thought of a black President.

With the media coverage a cacophonous standoff, and organizations like unions vanishing year by year, the Democratic skeptics in Ohio needed someone they knew and trusted to vouch for Obama. At S.E.I.U. headquarters, I spoke with Donna Steele, a home health aide working on the Obama campaign, about how she would make the case to Barbie Snodgrass. She said, "I've been where she is. I know exactly what it's like." A few years ago, Steele had been working in the homes of two separate clients, sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, sometimes past midnight. "I didn't know what day it was. I was numb. I fell asleep at traffic lights on my way home—woke up when someone honked." Steele, who had soft, startled pale-blue eyes and a frizzy reddish-blond perm, described the "weird spiral" into which she descended: "You're afraid of change, you just keep doing what you've been doing. You're afraid if you do anything different, things will get worse. You get so negative that you don't want anything to change—you think everything would be worse than this. You don't want anything to rock the boat. One false move and you're down." Eventually, she said, this mentality would make Snodgrass physically sick.

Steele went on, "I'd tell her she doesn't have to be alone. There's other people who've been down the same road. She just needs to look at the issues and it's real simple. 'What do you got to lose? What are you doing now? Voting for Obama and pulling that lever isn't going to make you any less tired than you was before.' " With McCain, health benefits would be taxed and oil prices would go up, whereas with Obama, "I think gas prices are going to miraculously go down because of his policies." Steele used almost mystical terms to describe the process by which Obama could transform Snodgrass's life. Her language was not so different from that of conservative Christians, except that Steele's community of believers was organized around class, not religion. "If she doesn't have some infrastructure"—like a union—"that can touch her, she doesn't have a chance," Steele said. "She's afraid of change, but if she doesn't demand change she's not going to make it. When something good happens, faith has a positive effect, the aura of it. It's called hope, faith, and it's change, and you get enough people together and it's massive change."

One day in Athens, I met Latisha Price. She was a big-boned blonde of thirty-seven, with a raw complexion, an Appalachian twang, and a forthright, vulnerable manner. "I come from a very bad background," she said within minutes of meeting me. Her mother had been an alcoholic, and Price had grown up in a series of foster homes, attending fourteen different schools. From the age of fifteen, she had been on her own, falling in with a series of abusive men, about whom she didn't want to say much. At twenty, she got a job in a nursing home; she still works there, as a cook and a nursing assistant.

"I noticed the union people would stand up for themselves," she recalled of her early days on the job. "And they seemed to be like a small family, a voice. I never had that. That's how I got active, and got so gutsy and eager to always jump in—I learned that from the union. When I first started, I was like a little mouse in the corner because I had so much drama in my life. I was too caught up in staying alive." Price, who now lives on a farm with her boyfriend, thirty guns, and every kind of domestic animal except pigs, runs the S.E.I.U.'s Obama office in Athens, with two graduates of Smith College working for her.

Price and I drove down Route 33 from Athens, into Meigs County and a town called Pomeroy, which once had been a loading dock for coal barges and now lay prostrate and blighted along the Ohio River. Across the river was West Virginia. Inasmuch as Price had a home town, Pomeroy was it.

"Meigs County is one of the worst," Price said as we drove. "We're going to a racist area—I won't lie to you. I have heard, pardon my French, 'Get the fuck off my porch, I'm not voting for no nigger.' " A few days earlier, she had twice been chased away by dogs. Price canvassed for Obama alone day after day, with a can of Mace in the car. She had learned not to wear an Obama T-shirt. People didn't react well—they seemed to take it as someone telling them whom to vote for.

She parked on a street that ran along the foot of the rock face looming over Pomeroy. It was early afternoon. There was no sign of life on the street except for two boxers in a yard, unleashed and barking at us. Price told me that their collars would register a shock if the dogs crossed a buried wire.

"I'm not scared of my home town," Price said. "I'm a pretty tough girl. Gotta be."

She had a list of voters—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—and we began to go door to door. Some of the residences were boarded shut, some were trailers with appliances lying out front. One or two were large, lavishly decaying houses with overgrown gardens. A front porch was sealed off by fallen branches.

A middle-aged woman in a nightdress peered out of a screen door. Price began her pitch.

"If the election was held today, have you decided who you'll vote for?"

The woman hesitated, then turned away to speak to someone inside. A man's voice called out, "We're not voting this year."

Price noted this on her sheet and thanked the woman.

She didn't leave the sidewalk to speak to the owner of the two snarling dogs. He said that he would probably vote for McCain, because he was a veteran. A shirtless young man in his underwear, who seemed to have just woken up, said that he was an Obama supporter and knew a few others. There was an AIDS ribbon tattooed on his right shoulder. "The ignorant ones that don't vote, they say Obama's a nigger and he's going to be assassinated," the young man said. "That is classic Meigs County." Farther down the street, two women and a little girl—three generations of a family—were getting out of a car. The grandmother said that she was undecided. She thought that McCain was wrong on the war, but she wasn't sure about Obama. Price left her with some literature and her phone number.

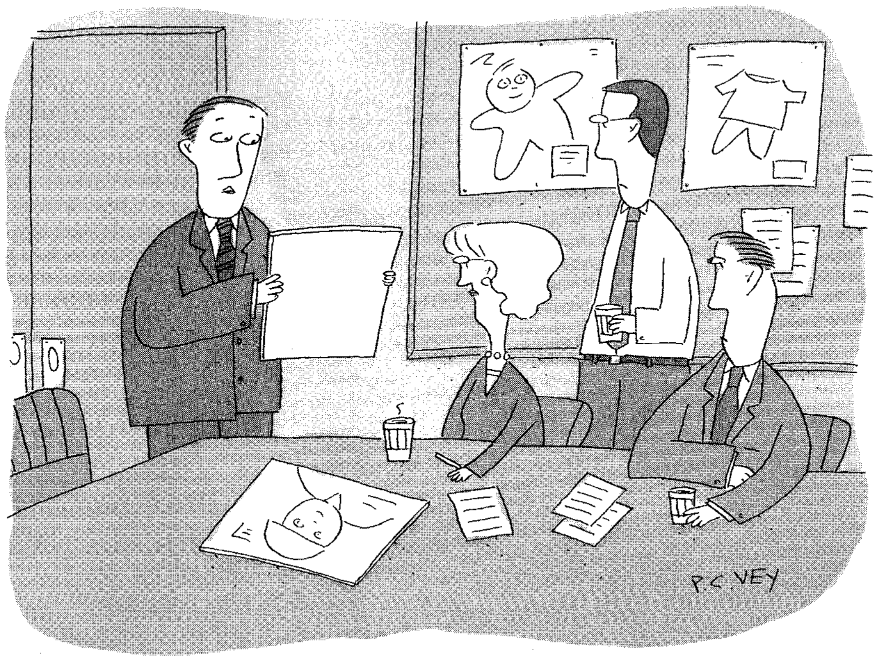
At the door of a trailer, Price knocked, then knocked again. Finally, the screen door opened a few inches. A white-haired, white-skinned ghost of an old woman identified herself as Betty.

"If the election was held today, have you decided who you'll vote for?"

" 'bama."

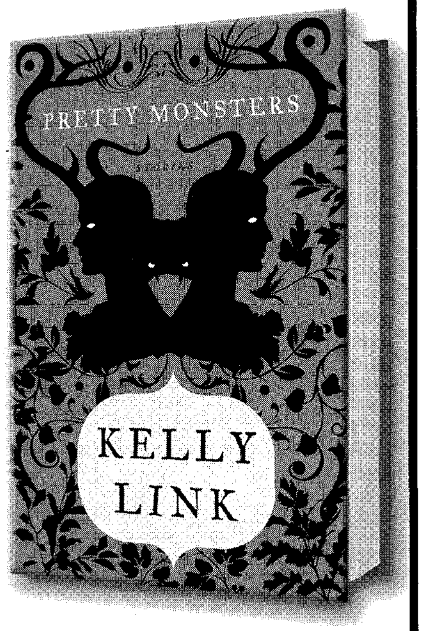
Recently, people in Ohio have told me that voters there have started to shift toward Obama. Gabe Kramer, of the S.E.I.U., said that, after the first Presidential debate and amid the financial crisis, union members seemed to find Obama's ideas and manner more persuasive than before. But even if Obama wins he will still have to overcome the deep skepticism of struggling Americans. For Barbie Snodgrass, who has a modest amount of stock in a retirement plan, the meltdown has turned this election into a make-or-break one, tipping her away from McCain without convincing her that she can trust Obama. "I'm going to have to pray to the holy gods that whoever I vote for is going to be honest and try to get us out of this mess," she said.

In Pomeroy, it had been a relatively good afternoon. As we drove back to Athens, Price said, "This job is a challenge, and I like that, but it's also sad and depressing. You see all these poor people that don't have anything, but they're still supporting the wrong party—that's the reason they don't have anything. I've canvassed single mothers with three kids, and they still don't see what's wrong with the Republican Party." She thought for a moment. "Obama's one of *us*," she said. "He comes from a blue-collar family. But people don't really see that." ♦



"I just don't think attack ads have a place in selling baby clothes."

From
acclaimed author
KELLY
LINK



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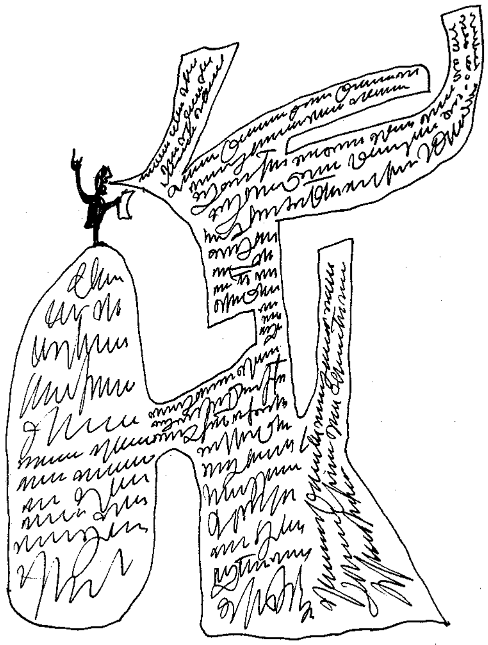
A CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

VERBAGE

The Republican war on words.

BY JAMES WOOD



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In recent elections, the Republican hate word has been "liberal," or "Massachusetts," or "Gore." In this election, it has increasingly been "words." Barack Obama has been denounced again and again as a privileged wordsmith, a man of mere words who has "authored" two books (to use Sarah Palin's verb), and done little else. The leathery extremist Phyllis Schlafly had this to say, at the Republican Convention, about Palin: "I like her because she's a woman who's worked with her hands, which Barack Obama never did, he was just an élitist who worked with words." The fresher-faced extremist Rick Santorum, a former Republican senator, called Obama "just a person of words," adding, "Words are everything to him." The once bipartisan campaign adviser Dick Morris and his wife and co-writer, Eileen McGann, argue that the McCain camp, in true Rovian fashion, is "using the Democrat's articulateness against him" (along with his education, his popularity, his intelligence, his wife—pretty much everything but his height, though it may come to that). John McCain's threatened cancellation of the first Presidential debate was the ultimate defiance, by action, of words; sure enough, afterward conservatives manfully disdained Barack Obama's "book knowledge." To have seen the mountains of Waziristan with one's own eyes—that is everything.

Doesn't this reflect a deep suspicion of language itself? It's as if Republican practitioners saw words the way Captain Ahab saw "all visible objects"—as "pasteboard masks," concealing acts and deeds and things—and, like Ahab, were bent on striking through those masks. The Melvillean atmosphere may not be accidental, since, beyond the familiar American anti-intellectualism—to work with words is not to work at all—there's a residual Puritanism. The letter killeth, as St. Paul has it, but the spirit giveth life. (In that first debate, McCain twice charged his opponent with the misdeed of "parsing words.") In this vision, there is something Pharisaical about words. They confuse, they corrupt; they get in the way of Jesus.

But we all need words, and both campaigns wrestle every day over them.

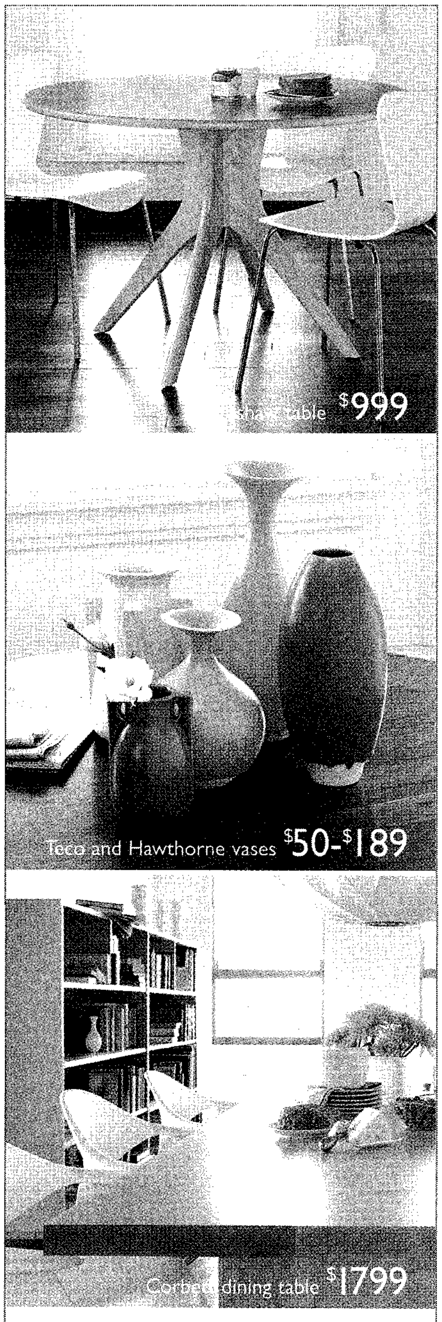
Words are up for grabs: just follow the lipstick traces. For days, the McCain camp accused Obama of likening Governor Palin to a pig, because he likened a retooled political message to a pig with lipstick. Eventually, McCain (who had previously described Senator Hillary Clinton's health-care plan as a pig with lipstick) was forced to fudge. No, he conceded, Senator Obama had not called Governor Palin a pig, "but I know he chooses his words carefully, and it was the wrong thing to say." This was instructive, not least because it sounded like implicit praise: maybe I don't choose my words very carefully, but he does, so he should have chosen them *more* carefully.

Meanwhile, the campaign that claims to loathe "just words" has proved expert at their manipulation, from reversals of policy to the outright lies of some of its attack ads ("comprehensive sex education") and the subtle racial innuendo of a phrase like "how disrespectful" (used to accuse Obama of making uppity attacks on Palin). Karl Rove—along with predecessors like Lee Atwater and protégés like Steve Schmidt—long ago showed the Republicans that language is slippery, fluid, a river into which you can dump anything at all as long as your opponent is the one downstream. And, to be fair, those who affect to despise words have been more skillful than their opponents not just at amoral manipulation but at the creation of what Orwell called "a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech." Pit bulls and lipstick stuck for good reason.

Or take McCain's slogan "The Original Maverick," now attached to many of the campaign's ads. It cynically stipulates that politics is just merchandise, by sounding as close to a logo or a brand name as possible. But it also understands that consumers trust brands that sound like "quality." Thus "Original," which has the reassuring solidity of something like "Serving Americans of discernment since 1851," or, indeed, "Levi's 501: Original Jeans." In such formulations, "Original" means eccentric, strange, unusual, and also first, best, belatedly copied by others. Better still, the phrase sounds like the tagline from a movie poster; not for nothing has McCain taken to announcing that "change is coming soon, to a district near you."

If Obama is the letter (words, fancy diplomas, "authored" books), then the latest representative of the spirit is Sarah Palin. Literary theorists used to say that their most abstruse prose was "writing the difficulty"—that the sentences were tortuous because there was no briskly commonsensical way of representing a complex issue. Sarah Palin, alas, talks the difficulty. She may claim, as she did in last Thursday's Vice-Presidential debate, that "Americans are cravin' that straight talk," but they are sure not going to get it from the Governor—not with her peculiar habit of speaking only half a sentence and then moving on to another for spoliation, that strange, ghostly drifting through the haziest phrases, as if she were cruelly condemned to search endlessly for her linguistic home: "I do take issue with some of the principle there with that redistribution of wealth principle that seems to be espoused by you." And words do matter, after all: it matters that our Vice-Presidential candidate says, as she did to Gwen Ifill, that "nuclear weaponry, of course, would be the be-all-end-all of just too many people in too many parts of our planet."

Hearing her being interviewed by Sean Hannity, on Fox News, almost made one wish for a Republican victory in November, so that her bizarre locutions might be available a bit longer to delve into. At times, even Hannity looked taken aback; his eyes, slightly too close to each other, like the headlamps on an Army jeep, went blank, as if registering the abyss we are teetering above. Or perhaps he just couldn't follow. The most revealing moment happened earlier, when she was asked about Obama's attack on McCain's claim that the fundamentals of the economy are sound. "Well," Palin said, "it was an unfair attack on the verbage that Senator McCain chose to use, because the fundamentals, as he was having to explain afterwards, he means our workforce, he means the ingenuity of the American people. And of course that is strong, and that is the foundation of our economy. So that was an unfair attack there, again, based on verbage that John McCain used." This is certainly doing rather than mere talking, and what is being done is the coinage of "verbage." It would be hard to find a better example of the Republican disdain for words than that remarkable term, so close to garbage, so far from language. ♦



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LETTER FROM CRAWFORD

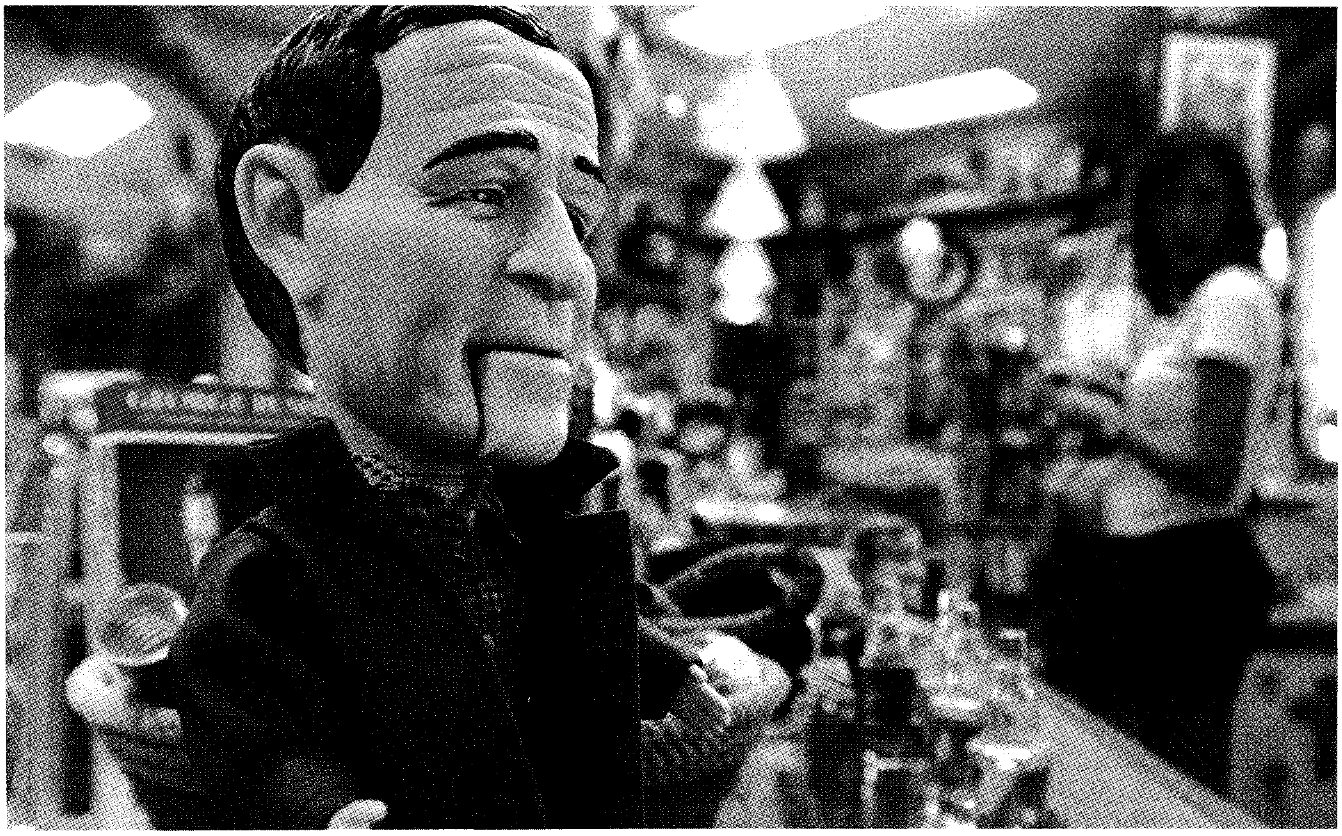
EXILE ON MAIN STREET

George W. Bush's weary neighbors.

BY PAMELA COLLOFF

Keith Lynch lives three miles down the road from President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, and, like many of his neighbors, he comes from a family that has worked cattle on this land for more than a century. His great-grandfather Will Simpson came to McLennan County in 1857, forty years before Crawford was incorporated as a town, and the hand-tooled saddle he rode on during sixteen cattle drives up the Chisholm Trail to Kansas sits in Lynch's living room beside a reliquary of Simpson's keepsakes (a pair of reading glasses, a wide-brimmed Western hat, a threadbare illustrated King James Bible). Lynch, who used to rope calves at local rodeos for prize money, is sun-weathered, soft-bellied, and partial to a white straw cowboy hat that he removes for Sunday-morning worship. At seventy, he still raises cattle on his family's ranch, nearly a thousand acres of blackland prairie that is Simpson's hard-won, if modest, legacy.

The prairie here, west of Waco, is flat and monotonous. Temperatures routinely break a hundred degrees in the summertime, and drought and grass fires are common. Wealthy Texans like to have their retreats elsewhere: in the wide-open, rugged grandeur of West Texas, near the Chinati Mountains; on South Texas's lush coastal plain, where Dick Cheney once famously went quail hunting; or in the bucolic Hill Country outside Austin, where Lyndon Johnson was born and grew up, and where, on visits home from Washington, he pioneered the role of Rancher-in-Chief. Until Bush's arrival, Crawford was not a desirable place to have a weekend home, or a town that most Texans could have located on a map. Cheap land and remoteness seem to have been its selling points. And, for the son of a President eager to reinvent himself as an outsider, there was no better place to manufacture a new persona. The plainspoken Dubya—who cleared brush, drove a pickup, and, by implication, was rooted in rural America and red-state values—deflected attention from a patrician life story that had been shaped as much by boarding school and the Ivy League as by his early years in Midland. Crawford gave him hometown credentials. In the summer of 1999, Bush, who was governor of Texas at the time—and a Republican front-runner for President—bought fifteen hundred and eighty-three acres of riverfront property for an estimated $1.2 million.



Of the seven gift shops in town that once hawked Bush souvenirs, three have gone broke, and only two still keep regular hours.

MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Not long afterward, real-estate speculators and Republican high rollers began asking Lynch how much he wanted for his land. Only two other properties separated him from Bush, and neither of them was as expansive or as scenic as Lynch's. Strangers from Dallas and Houston who had pored over surveys of the area at the county courthouse ("land buzzards," a

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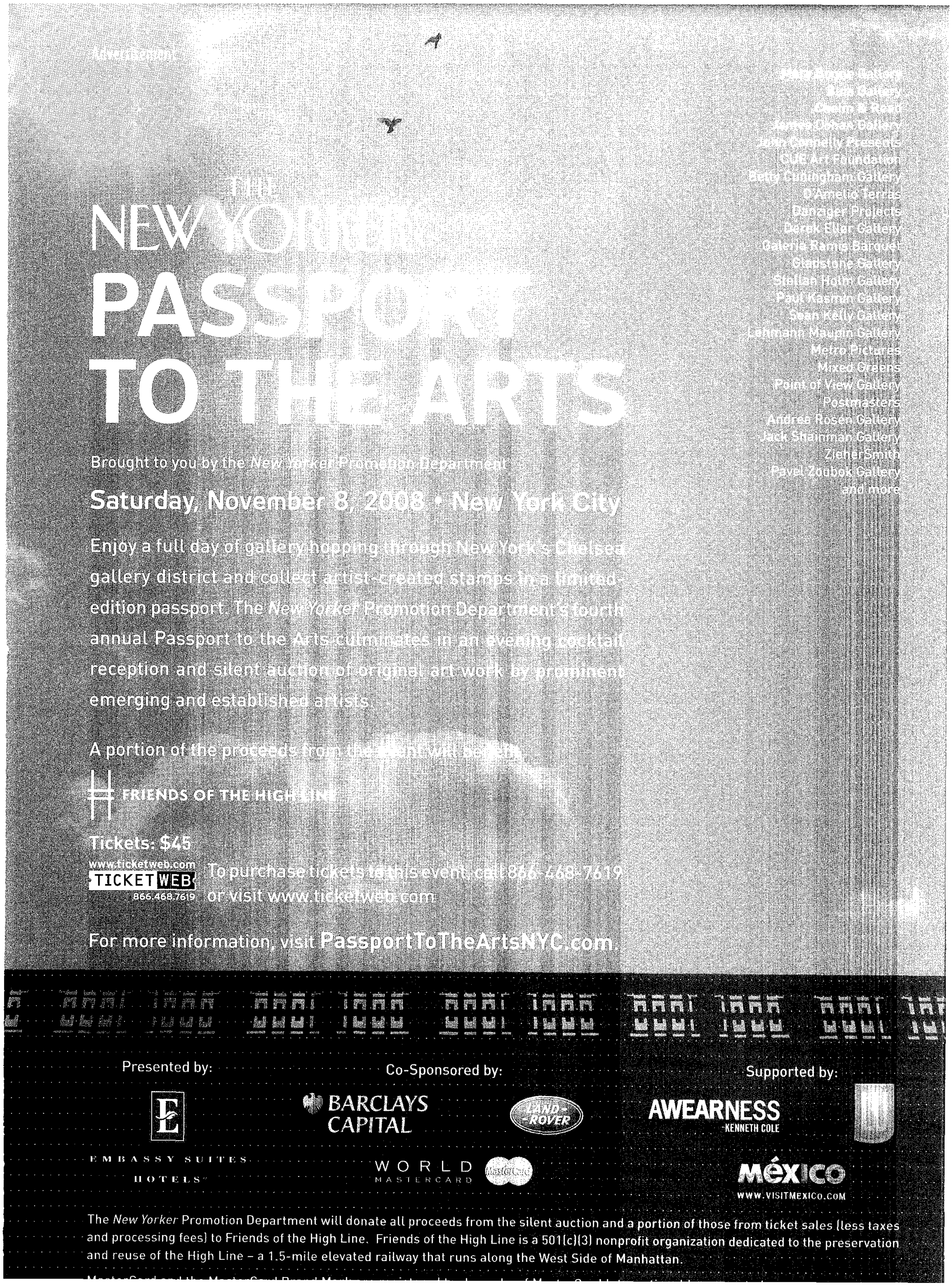

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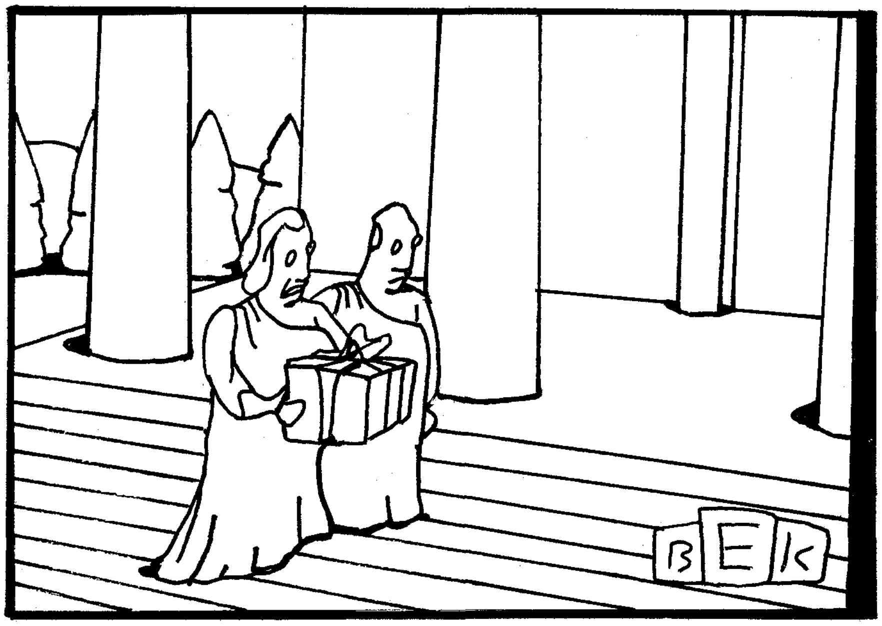

"I hope Pandora doesn't already have a box of mankind's evils."

neighbor called them) pulled into his driveway unannounced, offering as much as five thousand dollars an acre, more than twice what Lynch figured its market value was. "They wanted to be near Bush and they wouldn't take no for an answer," Lynch said. "You'd better not open your mouth or you'd have sold your land." Though he and his wife of fifty-two years, Billy Lu, stood to become millionaires, he refused to entertain any offers. Lynch's intransigence was mistaken for driving a hard bargain. "One guy told me to name my price and said, 'There isn't nothing in this world that's not for sale, nothing in this world.' "

From the start of Bush's first term, tourists with hand-drawn maps inched along Prairie Chapel Road in search of the Western White House. The single-story limestone ranch house is set back about a mile from the road, beyond a hill and a stand of hackberry trees, and is impossible to make out from the road. ("See that cedar post?" Jerry Walters, a Baptist preacher who had worked as a rural letter carrier on Prairie Chapel Road, asked me, the first time I went in search of the house, as I craned for a better view from his car. "See over the post, over yonder? How there's something shiny? In the trees, down low?") Sightseers stopped to snap photographs anyway. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, when Bush's approval rating rose to ninety per cent, Winnebagos chugged past Lynch's ranch, and people stopped to rubberneck at the checkpoint that the Secret Service had erected near the entrance to the President's property. When Bush stayed in Crawford, heads of state came to visit, and F-16 fighter jets and helicopters, which spooked Lynch's livestock, roared overhead. Once, the motorcade of a Middle Eastern dignitary had to make an unexpected stop when it came upon Lynch and his two border collies moving cattle across the road from one pasture to another. "On the weekends, it was bumper to bumper," Lynch told me. "You couldn't hardly get down the road."

But, as Bush's popularity waned, fewer people came to Crawford. By July, when I visited Lynch, he had spotted only a few groups of sightseers on Prairie Chapel Road all year. No one had made an offer on his ranch since Bush's first term. A tractor lurched by as we talked, but Prairie Chapel Road was deserted. Several of his goats, which had taken refuge under a shade tree, blinked dully in the heat. "Things have been dwindling away for a while," he told me. "Everybody's upset at the price of gas and the war dragging on. A lot of people around here don't think we ought to be over in Iraq, me being one of them." Like a number of farmers and ranchers I met, Lynch was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat whose hardscrabble upbringing had been steeped in New Deal populism. He had always voted a straight ticket, he told me, and had never cast a ballot for Bush. "There's a lot of Democrats I know that turned Republican just because Bush was from Texas," he said. "I can't say for sure, but I think most of them would vote Democrat if they had to vote tomorrow."

Lynch supported Hillary Clinton in the primary, and had since warmed to Barack Obama. Not all of his Democratic friends were comfortable voting for a black man, he told me, but they were eager to put the Bush years behind them. "It's just like I was telling someone the other day," Lynch said. "You've got to drive a long ways to find a Republican now."

Downtown Crawford, as locals refer to Main Street, is about eight miles from the ranch. It does not amount to much—a two-block-long business district, with several gift shops, a bank, two gas stations, a café, a granary, a video store, a custom-sign shop, and the Great Shapes beauty parlor. A blinking red stoplight on Main Street is the town's only traffic signal. East of the railroad tracks are the sagging frame houses and hard-packed dirt yards that belong to Crawford's few, mostly elderly, black residents. (The town is eighty-eight per cent white.) Rusted grain silos and a water tower make up the town's meagre skyline. Neighboring Coryell County is home to a training range for Fort Hood, the largest armored Army post in the nation, and what sounds like thunder is often the shudder of ordnance exploding across the plains.

The storefronts along Main Street, a sunburned, treeless stretch of State Highway 317 that runs along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway line, were mostly vacant when I came to Crawford this spring. Of the seven gift shops that once hawked "Mission Accomplished" coffee mugs and "This Is Bush Country" refrigerator magnets and "Lovya Dubya" bumper stickers, three had gone broke. Only two, the Red Bull and the Crawford General Store, still kept regular hours. The Red Bull's manager, a sturdy woman named Jamie Burgess, sat on a bench outside the store. "They're closed, but we're open!" she shouted down the street one afternoon

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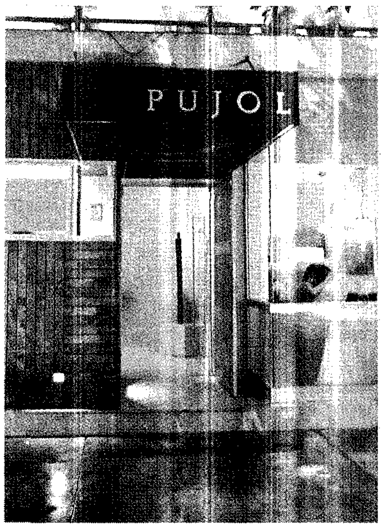

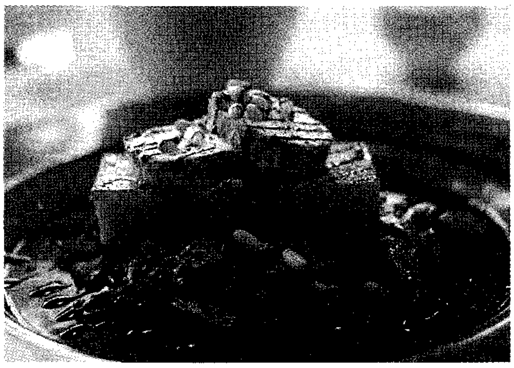

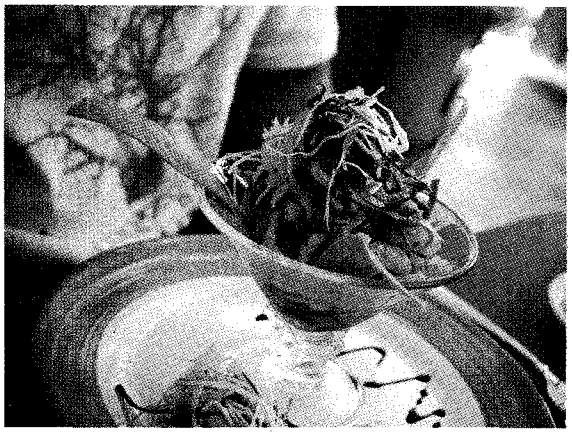

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Up-and-coming Chef Enrique Olvera pursues a similar path at **Pujol**, another Mexico City restaurant known for giving traditional tastes a new twist. Trained at the Culinary Institute of America, Olvera crafts innovative dishes such as duck carpaccio with mezcal foam or squash-blossom cappuccino, a soup topped with frothed coconut milk and nutmeg.

On the Baja Peninsula, Chef Angel Carbajal takes advantage of the local seafood bounty to create sushi with a Mexican flavor at his two **Nick-San** restaurants in Los Cabos. For instance, yellowfin tuna belly is served on a rice-cracker tostada along with sliced avocado drizzled with habanero red-onion sauce—a clever alternative to wasabi.

At **Pitahayas**, in Cabo San Lucas, German Chef Volker Romeike gives Pacific catches an Asian and Latin flair, like fresh salmon with steamed rice, Japanese *namasu* (pickles), Korean *kalbi* (barbecue) sauce, and fried yucca root. The restaurant's underground stone wine cellar houses more than five hundred wines from around the world.

Seafood is also the highlight at **¡Que Fresco!**, a colorful beachside restaurant at the Zamas Hotel in Tulum, south of Cancún. This casual dining favorite features grouper, snapper, and other local catches flavored with Mayan spices like achiote, a mild red seasoning typical of the Yucatán Peninsula. Alfresco diners are also treated to sunset views.

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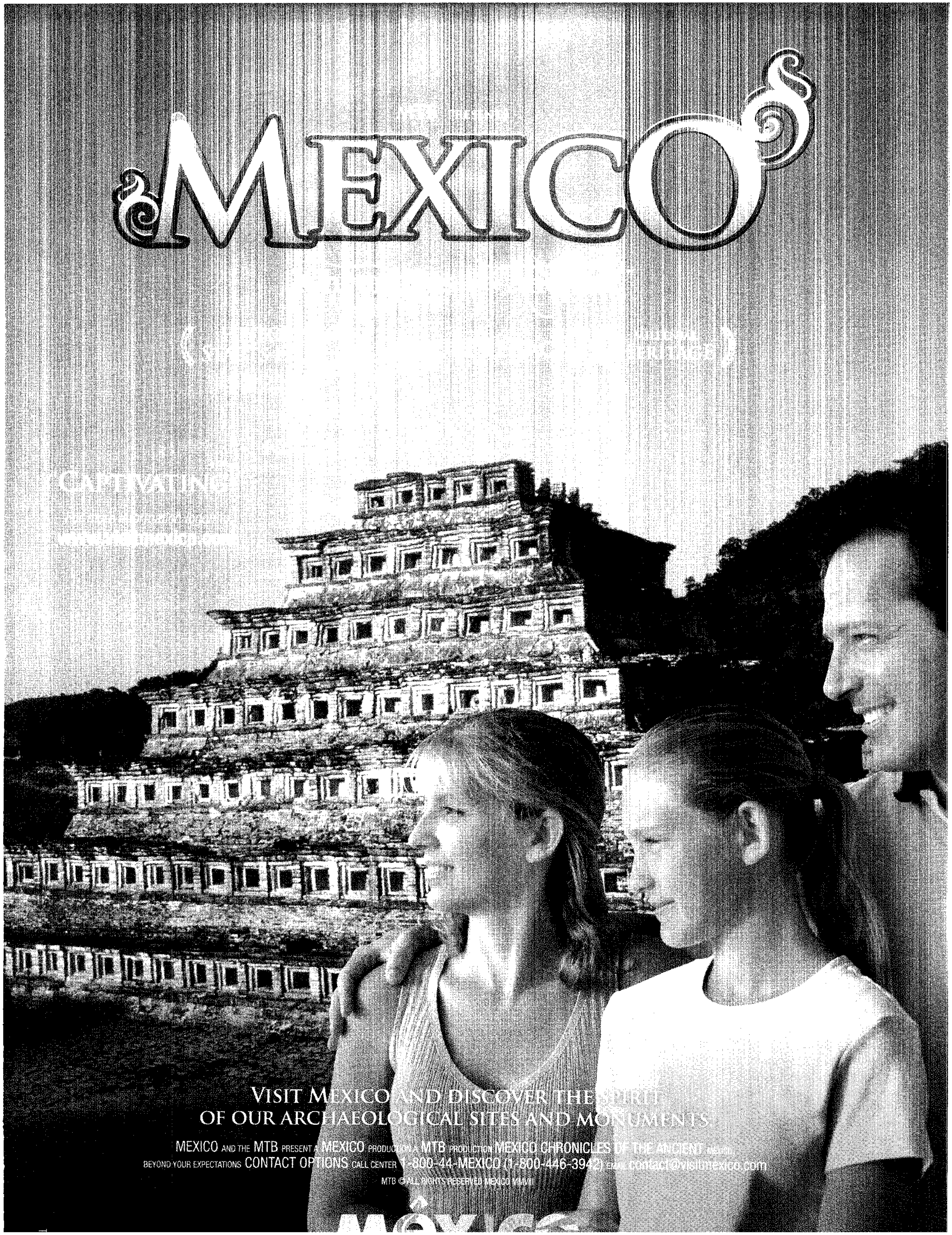
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as I peered in a rival store's window.

Bush's approval rating had stalled at just under thirty per cent, and in Crawford it was no longer impolitic to criticize the President; over a game of dominoes at the Masonic Lodge, I heard a John McCain supporter named Booger DeChaume argue that it was Bush, with his ties to big oil companies, who was to blame for the rising price of gasoline. "What happened when Jimmy Carter was President?" DeChaume asked the group of farmers and ranchers who sat around the battered card table. "The price of peanuts went up!" Across the street, at the Crawford General Store, the clerk behind the counter, Carla Drake, told me that she had voted for the first time in 2000, for Bush. The second time was in March, when she had cast her ballot in the Democratic primary for Barack Obama. "I'm tired of hearing that this is his home town, because it ain't," she said, referring to Bush.

I saw that the lights were on one afternoon at Di-An-Tiques & Things, and, when I stopped in, the owner, Diane Binnion, told me that I was her first customer of the day. She had moved her souvenirs—which included a Bush nesting doll and a talking Bill Clinton action figure that said, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"—to the back of her store, and had tried to fill in the shelves with bric-a-brac. She planned to close the store after Bush left office. "I used to sell a lot of these," she said, gesturing toward a display of "Bush Country" coffee mugs, when I asked what her most popular item had been. "Now, this was *not* a good seller," she said, walking over to a pile of tan T-shirts emblazoned with the words "Operation Iraqi Freedom." "You see how many I got? I'm going to have to run a special."

In Crawford, people speak unselfconsciously about their Saviour and about their lives as being blessed. On my first visit to the Coffee Station, one family joined hands to say grace before their meal, and a boy at the table next to mine asked his father, "Was Jesus alive when Noah's ark was built?" The town has seven hundred and five residents, and there are seven churches in the area, three of them Baptist. (Bush has apparently gone to church in Crawford three times in eight years, once at the Methodist church and twice at Canaan Baptist.) Revivals on the

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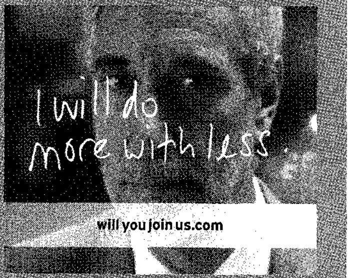
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high-school football field were discontinued in the nineteen-eighties, but a local ordinance still forbids the sale of alcohol. Gambling is sufficiently frowned upon that even penny-ante rounds of dominoes are not played at the Masonic Lodge. Crawford has two full-time police officers, and the most pressing issue for them, Chief Eddie McCoy told me, was loose livestock in the road. Across the street from McCoy's office, I spotted a granite marker commemorating the Crawford Pirates' 2004 high-school division championship in football. Engraved on the back was the coach's maxim, "Nobody big. Nobody small. Everybody the same."

During the 2000 campaign and his first term, Bush used to make regular, if highly choreographed, trips into town. Crawford was a backdrop ready-made for Karl Rove stagecraft. The President shook hands at the Coffee Station; signed legislation, flanked by hay bales; and chopped cedar in the height of summer as a White House photographer captured the look of steely resolve under his sweat-stained cowboy hat. The White House press corps broadcast standup TV reports in front of a pasture, dotted with bales of hay, that was not outside the ranch but in town, next to the high-school running track.

Residents gave effusive interviews and threw their own inaugural ball at the community center. "Everyone hoped he would breathe some life back into this little town," a rancher, Clark Weber, told me. During Bush's first term, a group calling itself Keep Crawford Beautiful organized fireworks displays and an annual homecoming festival; volunteers decorated downtown at Christmastime and put planters on Main Street. "We thought, We need to do something—the whole world is going to be looking at us," Shirley Westerfield, a charter member, told me. A two-story mural of Crawford, depicting an American flag as it unfurled above the words "Home of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush," was painted on canvas and hung on an old brick wall on the side of the Masonic Lodge. (This spring, the Masons asked that the painting be taken down.) When an upstart local newspaper, the *Lone Star Iconoclast*, published an editorial endorsing John Kerry, in 2004, many people in town cancelled their subscriptions and voted for Bush a second time.

Enthusiasm began to ebb in August of 2005, when Cindy Sheehan camped outside the President's ranch to protest the war in Iraq. Bush refused to meet with her during the twenty-six-day vigil, which drew thousands of people to Prairie Chapel Road and media attention from around the world. Residents told me that they had been pushed to the limit by the antiwar activists who descended on their town, blocking roadways and pulling Crawford into the national debate over the war. "A lot of people started wishing to hell that Bush never would have showed up," one rancher told me. At the end of August, as the protests continued, Hurricane Katrina made landfall. Bush was in Crawford at the time. Two days after New Orleans's levees were breached, he returned to Washington, by way of California. "Things never quite went back to the way they were," Westerfield said.

Tourism picked up this year when Jenna Bush married Henry Hager at the ranch on May 10th. The Coffee Station was packed that day with out-of-towners hoping to catch a glimpse of the First Family, and the Red Bull did a brisk trade in Jenna-and-Henry-themed coasters, mousepads, and Christmas ornaments. The bride wore Oscar de la Renta and danced with the President to "You Are So Beautiful" while guests ate fried oysters and lump-crab parfait. But no one from Crawford was invited, and by sundown Main Street was empty. At Crawford High School's graduation, which I attended several weeks later, there was no mention of the President, who had delivered the commencement address eight years earlier. When Kevin Noack, the superintendent, spoke to the audience about how this fall would mark "the end of an era for Crawford," he was referring to the retirement of Mary Keltner, the school's longtime custodian.

Nearly everyone I met offered to show me where the ranch was—no one seemed to think that an outsider could find it. One of my guides was Clark Weber, a jovial, ruddy-cheeked McCain supporter who took a detour on the way which brought us through one of his own pastures. "We're going to check cattle, so you can see what a real rancher does," he told me before making the obligatory pass by Bush's property. The president of the chamber of commerce, an upbeat woman named Marilyn Judy, also took me by the ranch. "You can't see anything out here," she said with a good-natured laugh as we neared the Secret Service checkpoint. "In the classroom, I just show it to my kids on Google Earth."

Judy teaches special-education students at Crawford High School, and is the Sunday-school superintendent at First Baptist Church, where she was the pianist for years. ("I've done everything in church but preach," she told me.) She also was on call twenty-four hours a day as a volunteer for the local E.M.S. "This past week, we had a guy gored by a bull," she said. "We've even had a seventy-six-year-old gentleman who lost two fingers calf-roping. We get the occasional car wreck, or kids who jump off a cliff into Tonk Creek and break a leg, but mostly we respond to calls from our older population." After a spate of snake bites two summers ago, she started carrying a garden hoe in her ambulance. "Stuff like that doesn't bother me," she said. "I was raised around cattle—and castrating and dehorning—so killing a snake really is no biggie." As we talked, she pulled out her scrapbook of Bush memorabilia, which included a photograph of her seated beside Vladimir Putin's wife and Laura Bush in the school gymnasium during a 2001 visit by Putin, who was then the President of Russia. When Judy reached the end of the album, she closed it and sighed. "I feel like Crawford put its best foot forward and rose to the occasion as well as a little town could, and now it's over," she said. "It's been a fun ride."

Another afternoon, I stopped in to see a rancher named Larry Mattlage, who lives about four miles from the President. We talked in his pickup as we made our way along Prairie Chapel Road. Mattlage had come of age in Crawford in the nineteen-fifties. His family had grown their own food and made their own clothes, and he had lived without running water until he was eight years old. He had played football and picked cotton and gone swimming in Tonk Creek—and he was nostalgic, he told me, for the isolation that the town had enjoyed back then. His family had lived in Crawford since the eighteen-eighties, so he had watched with bemusement as Bush cast himself as both a rancher and a native son. "No one who has any sense cuts cedar in the summer," Mattlage told me. "Only winter-cut cedar can be used for fence posts. Besides, it's

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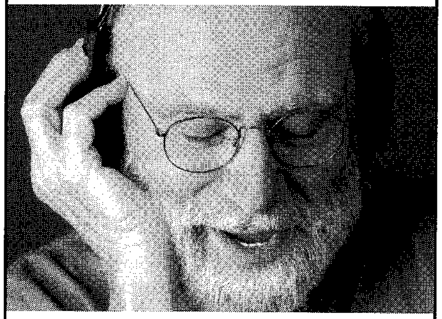

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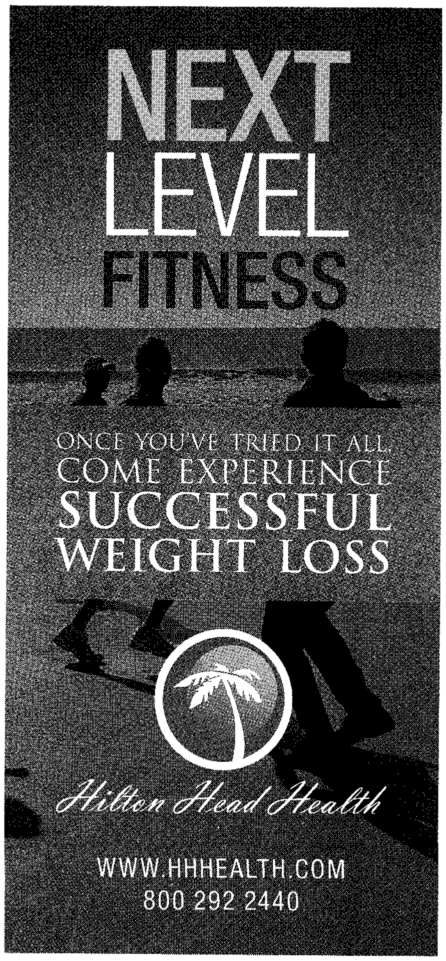

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hot, hard work. It was always kind of a joke to us who knew the country that he was out clearing brush in the middle of August." The President's ranch had not always been a cattle ranch; under a previous owner, it had once been a hog farm. "You could smell it for miles," Mattlage said with a grin, spitting tobacco into an empty Shiner beer bottle.

Mattlage drove past the President's property and on toward his church, St. John's Lutheran, which he wanted me to see. "Everyone is ready for ol' George to leave us alone and let Crawford go back to the way it was," he said. "Most people around here want to get this whole thing over with, kind of like a bad marriage."

Ahead of us, Mattlage spotted a pickup in the opposite lane. He cracked open his window and waved. "What you say, Michael Bohne?" he said, coming to a stop in the middle of the road.

The farmer rolled down his window. "I think I'm going to quit for the day," he said, killing his engine. The two men sat in silence.

"It's been hot, ain't it?" Mattlage offered.

"Yeah," Bohne said, staring out at the prairie. "Wasn't so bad today."

"You get a good rain like I got?"

"No," Bohne said. "What'd you get—two inches?"

Mattlage nodded. "Two inches."

"You must be doing something right over there. Every time it rains, you get two inches."

"Just lucky," Mattlage said.

We continued on until we reached a white clapboard church that sat on top of a windswept rise. "Before this was grazing land, the prairie grass used to grow so tall that it touched your stirrups," Mattlage said. He showed me where his grandparents were buried, behind a wrought-iron fence in the church's plain but well-tended cemetery, and he removed his hat as we stood by their markers. Before we turned to go, he walked over to a granite monument that listed the names of local men who had died in past wars. "Out here, you walk past these names every Sunday," he told me. "So you never forget." Squinting in the summer glare, he studied the list before him. "See, there's Charles Jageler," Mattlage said. "Killed in action. He and I went to church together. And here's another one I grew up with, Tommie Lee Symank. Killed in action. Just twenty-seven years old."

Mattlage pointed to the word "Iraq," etched beneath the roster of Vietnam's dead. There were no casualties listed yet, only polished granite where names could be inscribed in the future. "I guess that's his legacy right there," Mattlage said, putting on his hat. "That's what ol' George has left us."

The President's summer sojourn in Crawford this year lasted less than two weeks, a departure from other years, when he stayed for almost a month. Bush's primary home, once he leaves office, will be in Dallas, a hundred and twenty miles away. His Presidential library will be there, at Southern Methodist University, not at Baylor University, in nearby Waco, as locals had initially hoped. (Waco, a city eager to rebrand itself after the 1993 Branch Davidian standoff, had posted a sign in its visitors' center that boasted, "How do you spell Waco? Well, it starts with a Dubya." It was later taken down.)

In July, at a closed-door Republican fund-raiser in Houston, Bush was caught in a video, taken by a guest, talking about the economic downturn. "Wall Street got drunk . . . and now it's got a hangover," Bush said. "We've got a housing issue," he went on, and then added, in a tone of mock gravity, "Not in Houston, evidently not in Dallas, because Laura's over there trying to buy a house today."

The crowd erupted in laughter. "What about Crawford?" someone shouted.

"I like Crawford," Bush said. Then, with the helplessness of a husband who, having put his wife through a hardship assignment, now has to make it up to her, he went on, "Unfortunately, after eight years of asking her to sacrifice, I'm now no longer the decision-maker." The laughter grew louder as he continued, "She'll be deciding—thanks for the suggestion. I suggest you don't yell it out when she's here."

During the President's stay in Crawford this August, only a dozen or so reporters were stationed in town; most of the national press corps was on the campaign trail. Even the Peace House—a run-down bungalow east of the railroad tracks that had served as base for peace activists since 2003—was deserted, its shutters drawn behind a sign that said "No Preemptive Armageddon." "Joe said this morning when I walked into the coffee shop, 'It sure is quiet in town,'" Clark Weber told me, referring to one of his neighbors. "There was nobody on the streets. Everybody's pickup was in front of the right house. Nobody had run off with nobody's wife. Joe and I sat there and looked at one another and drank coffee, and we couldn't even think of anything to talk about."

The first game of the high-school football season fell two days after Bush returned to Washington. Obama had given his acceptance speech the night before at the Democratic National Convention, and, earlier that day, McCain had announced that Sarah Palin would be his running mate. But the talk in the stands that night was about the merits of the Pirates' defensive strategy, and whether Franklin Industrial Minerals, the rock quarry that is the town's largest private employer, was going to shift to a four-day workweek because of the rising cost of fuel. The stadium was crowded, and under the electric lights the air was warm and humid. "Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar!" Crawford's cheerleaders cried between cartwheels. "All for the Pirates, stand up and holler!" Little girls in miniature cheerleader uniforms studied them from the sidelines. Boys chased one another under the bleachers. Behind me, a chorus of directives was shouted at the players by their fathers. ("Come on, now!" "Rough him up!" "Get him!" "Pick it up, boys!") When one of the Pirates suffered an injury and lay on the ground grimacing, his teammates knelt on one knee until he stood up and limped off the field to a roar of applause. Crawford trounced the Jarrell Cougars, 20–3, and at the end of the game everyone rose to their feet to sing the school song. Afterward, the players repaired to First Baptist Church for Kool-Aid and Frito pie.

By the time I left town, the sky was moonless and dark. A freight train cast the only bright light for miles as it hurtled across the prairie. On Main Street, a "Bush Country" banner that had decorated one of the grain silos was missing. The wind had knocked it down a while ago, and no one had bothered to hang it up again. ♦

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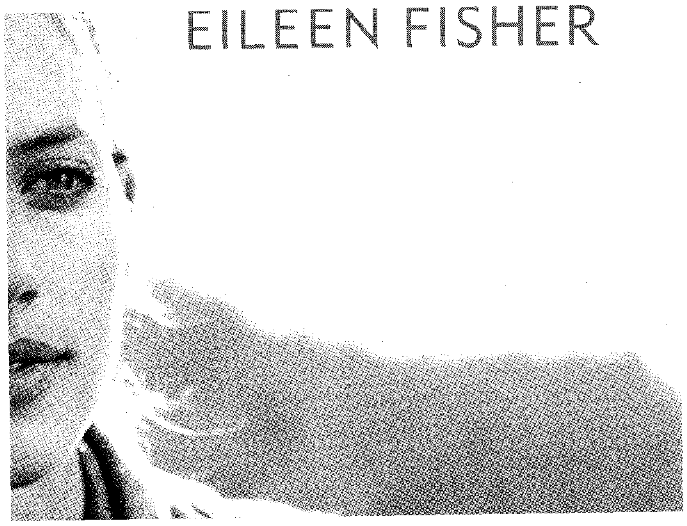
An audio interview with Pamela Colloff.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LIPSTICK ON A PIG: A 2008 CAMPAIGN QUIZ

BY PAUL SLANSKY

1. What question was John McCain asked that prompted eight seconds of silence before he said he'd get back to the reporter later?

(a) Why he couldn't campaign and worry about the financial crisis at the same time.

(b) Whether it was fair to allow Viagra to be covered by health insurance, but not birth-control pills, as he had voted.

(c) Why he said, "Now is not the time to affix the blame" for the failure of the first bailout bill, right after blaming Obama for it.

(d) Why he lied to David Letterman.

2. Which of Joe Biden's gaffes did Chris Wallace present as the equivalent of Sarah Palin's "Putin rears his head" interview with Katie Couric?

(a) His suggestion that Hillary Clinton "might have been a better pick" as Barack Obama's running mate.

(b) His calling an Obama ad about McCain's computer illiteracy "terrible."

(c) His reference to Obama as "Barack America."

(d) His remark "When the stock market crashed, Franklin Roosevelt got on television . . . he said, 'Look, here's what happened.' "

(e) His telling a wheelchair-bound man, "Stand up—let 'em see you."

Match the number with what it represents.

3. Number of times that Obama told a Presidential-debate audience that McCain was "absolutely right."

4. Number of times that McCain was caught on camera during the first debate appearing to mutter "Horseshit" under his breath.

5. Number of states that Obama claimed to have visited.

6. Obama's seven-frame bowling score.

7. Number of times that Palin said "Charlie" during her first interview with Charlie Gibson.

8. Number of hours before the first debate began that ads crowing about McCain's victory in the debate appeared on the *Wall Street Journal's* Web site.

(a) Forty-seven.
(b) Ten.
(c) Six.
(d) Fifty-seven.
(e) Two.
(f) At least eleven.

9. Complete John McCain's boast about Sarah Palin: "She knows more about ________ than probably anyone else in the United States of America."

(a) Russia
(b) energy
(c) the Bush doctrine
(d) aerial hunting
(e) hiding a pregnancy
(f) lipstick

Who did what?
10. Rudy Giuliani.
11. General Wesley Clark.
12. Representative Lynn Westmoreland (R.-Ga.).
13. Joy Behar.
14. Condoleezza Rice.
15. John Edwards.

(a) Called the Obamas "uppity."

(b) Said, "Being ninety-nine per cent honest is no longer enough."

(c) Told McCain to his face that two of his ads "are untrue, they're lies."

(d) Offered as Palin's qualification for the Vice-Presidency the fact that "she's governor of a state here in the United States."

(e) Was excoriated for daring to point out that being a P.O.W. is not a qualification for the Presidency.

(f) Joined Republican Convention delegates in a chant of "Drill, baby, drill!"

16. Who is Douglas Holtz-Eakin?

(a) The Obama aide who suggested sticking a fake Presidential seal on the candidate's lectern.

(b) The McCain adviser who claimed that his boss "helped create" the BlackBerry by virtue of having been on the Senate committee that oversees the telecommunications industry.

(c) The Palin aide in Alaska who was fired after she discovered that he was dating the ex-wife of one of her husband's friends.

(d) The McCain adviser who said that a terrorist attack on U.S. soil "would be a big advantage to him."

(e) The Obama campaign worker who moved two women in Muslim garb out of camera range during a photo op.

17. True or false: During a post-debate appearance on "Fox News Sunday," Senator Lindsey Graham (R.-S.C.) interrupted his pro-McCain spin and said, "It's Sunday, I'm tired. Senator Obama did well. Senator Obama helped himself."

Who did what?
18. Levi Johnston.
19. Chris Rock.
20. Ed Koch.
21. Cliff Schecter.
22. Sarah Palin.
23. Chris Matthews.

(a) Summed up the idea of having experience in Washington as "somebody's big fat résumé."

(b) Pointed out Bill Clinton's reluctance to speak Obama's name.

(c) Said that Giuliani's "maniacal laugh" during his Convention keynote speech was reminiscent of Richard Widmark's as he pushed an old woman in a wheelchair down the stairs in the film "Kiss of Death."

(d) Wrote a book relating an incident in which "Cindy playfully twirled McCain's hair and said, 'You're getting a little thin up there,' and McCain shot back, 'At least I don't plaster on the makeup like a trollop, you cunt.' "

(e) Wondered if McCain had been "too much of a troll" during the debate.

(f) Wrote on his MySpace page, "I don't want kids."

24. Who is Jessica Herzberg?

(a) The half sister of Cindy McCain who said that she's voting for Barack Obama.

(b) The Fox News producer who was

fired for putting up a chyron that referred to Obama's wife as his "baby mama."

(c) The conservative columnist who wrote, "If BS were currency, Palin could bail out Wall Street herself."

(d) The Fox News anchor whose show was cancelled after she suggested that Michelle Obama's victory knuckle bump might have been a "terrorist fist jab."

Who said what about the original bailout legislation?

25. "[It's a] crap sandwich."

26. "[It's] a huge cow patty with a piece of marshmallow stuck in the middle of it."

27. "If I were a dictator, which I always aspire to be, I would write it a little bit differently."

(a) John McCain.

(b) Representative Paul Broun (R.-Ga.).

(c) House Minority Leader John Boehner (R.-Ohio).

28. Who is Andrew Halcro?

(a) The Philadelphia resident whose question to Sarah Palin about striking terrorist targets in Pakistan prompted her to unknowingly voice her support for the policy endorsed by Barack Obama and rejected by John McCain.

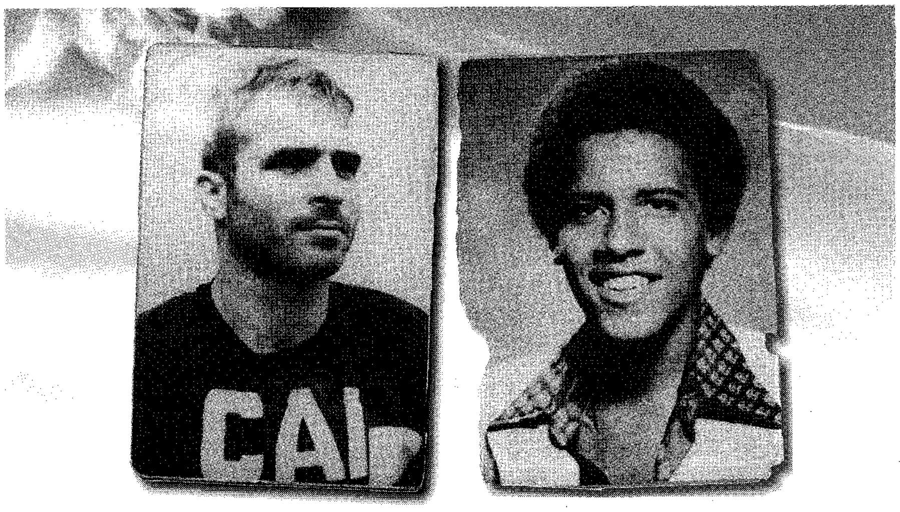
(b) The Air Force major who said that, despite her claims, Sarah Palin has no authority whatsoever in the defense of Alaskan airspace.

(c) The Alaska politician who said that the difference in experience between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin "is like the difference between shooting a bullet and throwing a bullet."

(d) The originator of the Palin nickname Moose-alini.

29. True or false: On the same day that Barack Obama was seen on TV flying over Iraq in a helicopter with General David Petraeus, John McCain was seen on TV in the cheese aisle of a supermarket explaining his confusion about the Iraq-war time line.

Answers: (1) b, (2) d, (3) c, (4) e, (5) d, (6) a, (7) b, (8) f, (9) b, (10) f, (11) e, (12) a, (13) c, (14) d, (15) b, (16) b, (17) True, (18) f, (19) b, (20) c, (21) d, (22) a, (23) e, (24) b, (25) c, (26) b, (27) a, (28) c, (29) False—He was seen riding around in a golf cart with former President George H. W. Bush. The cheese-aisle event occurred two days later.



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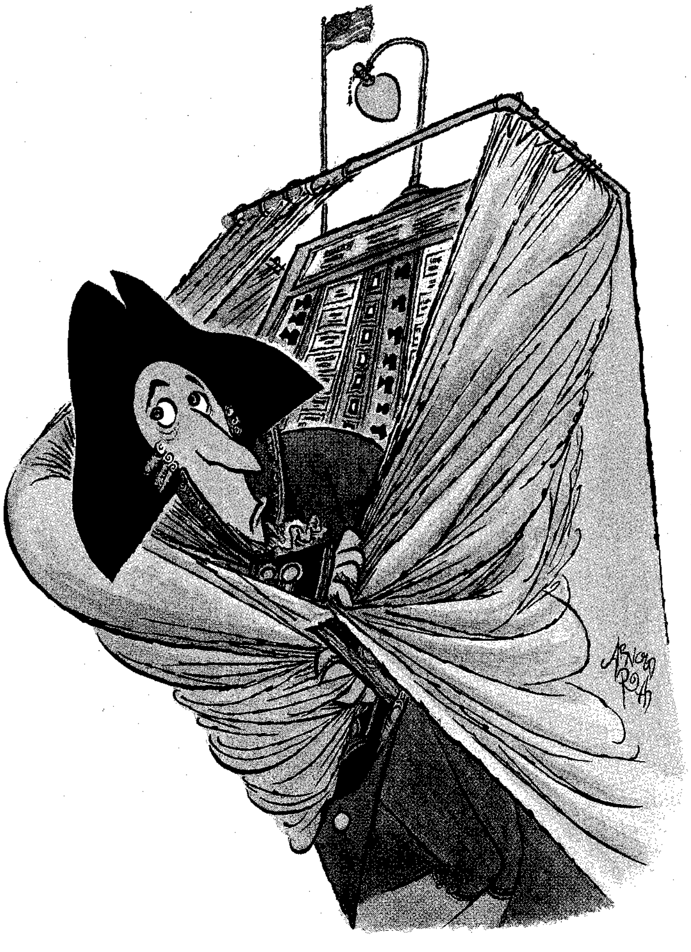
How we used to vote.

BY JILL LEPORE

On the morning of November 2, 1859—Election Day—George Kyle, a merchant with the Baltimore firm of Dinsmore & Kyle, left his house with a bundle of ballots tucked under his arm. Kyle was a Democrat. As he neared the polls in the city's Fifteenth Ward, which was heavily dominated by the American Party, a ruffian tried to snatch his ballots. Kyle dodged and wheeled, and heard a cry: his brother, just behind him, had been struck. Next, someone clobbered Kyle, who drew a knife, but didn't have a chance to use it. "I felt a pistol put to my head," he said. Grazed by a bullet, he fell. When he rose, he drew his own pistol, hidden in his pocket. He spied his brother lying in the street. Someone else fired a shot, hitting Kyle in the arm. A man carrying a musket rushed at him. Another threw a brick, knocking him off his feet. George Kyle picked himself up and ran. He never did cast his vote. Nor did his brother, who died of his wounds. The Democratic candidate for Congress, William Harrison, lost to the American Party's Henry Winter Davis. Three months later, when the House of Representatives convened hearings into the election, whose result Harrison contested, Davis's victory was upheld on the ground that any "man of ordinary courage" could have made his way to the polls.

Voting in America, it's fair to say, used to be different. "Are you not a man in the full vigor of manhood and strength?" a member of the House Committee on Elections asked another Harrison supporter who, like Kyle, went to the polls but turned back without voting (and who happened to stand six feet and weigh more than two hundred pounds). The hearings established a precedent. "To vacate an election," an election-law textbook subsequently advised, "it must clearly appear that there was such a display of force as ought to have intimidated men of ordinary firmness."

What was at stake, in the House Committee on Elections, was whether men like George Kyle were too easily daunted. What wasn't at stake was that Kyle, an ordinary voter, carried with him to the polls a bundle of ballots. Nowhere in the United States in 1859 did election officials provide ballots. Kyle, like everyone else, brought his own. The ballots he carried, preprinted "party tickets," endorsed the slate of Democratic candidates, headed by Harrison. Voters got their ballots either from a partisan, at the polls, or at home, by cutting them out of the newspaper. Then they had to cross through the throngs to climb a platform placed against the wall of a building (voters weren't allowed inside) and pass their ballots through a window and into the hands of an election judge. This was no mean feat, and not only in Baltimore. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, eighty-nine Americans were killed at the polls during Election Day riots.

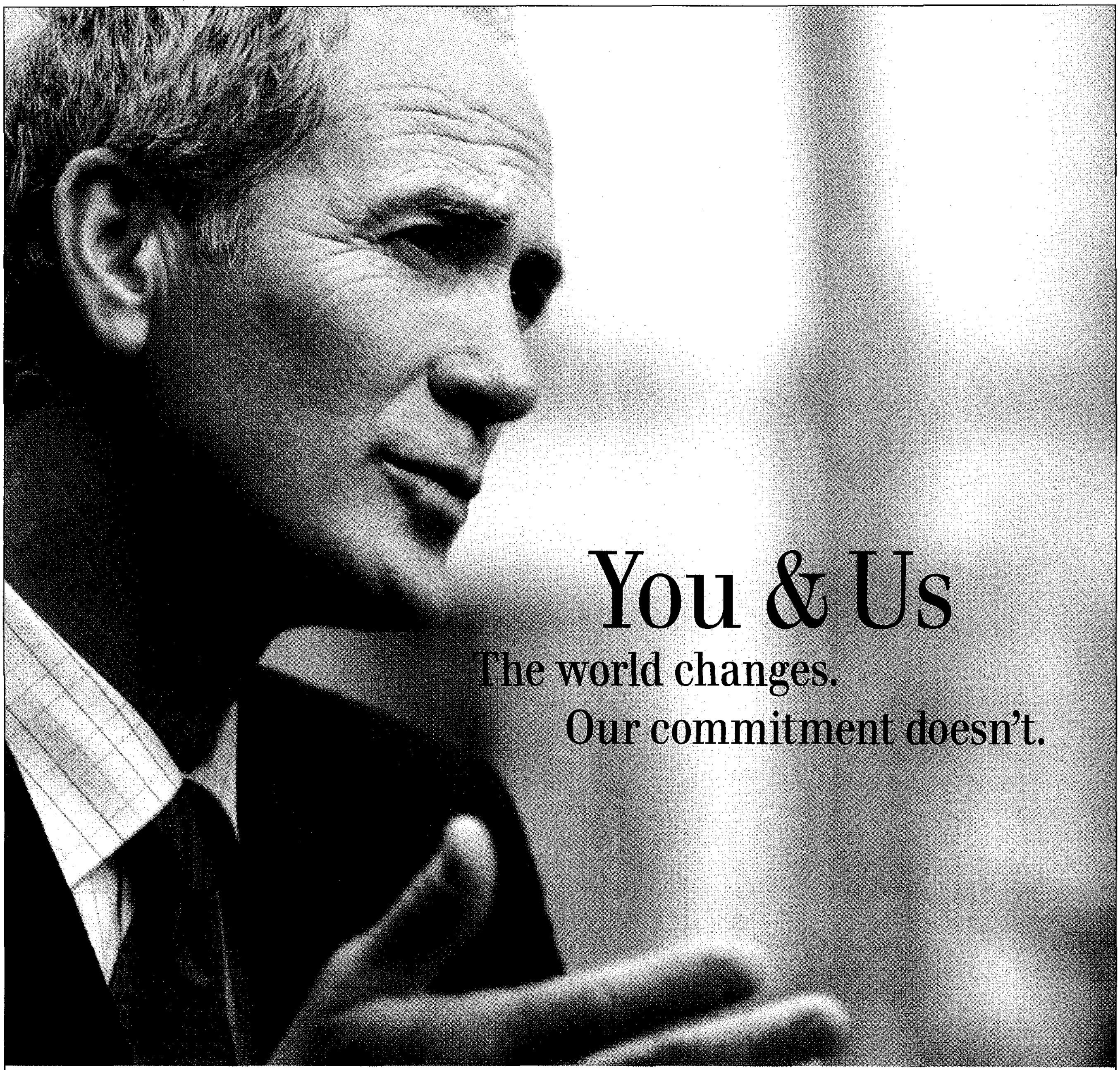


The founders didn't anticipate that voting would be done in secret.

ARNOLD ROTH

The reform that ended this unsettling state of affairs was imported from Australia, and was not achieved in the United States until the eighteen-nineties. The American adoption of the "Australian ballot"—and the radical idea that governments should provide ballots—was hard fought. It lies, if long forgotten, behind every argument about how we ought to vote now, from the 2002 Help America Vote Act's promotion of paperless voting to the more recent backlash, favoring a paper trail. And it is also, like every other American election reform, a patch upon a patch.

The United States was founded as an experiment in eighteenth-century republicanism, in which it was understood that only men with property would vote, and publicly, since they were the only people who could be trusted to vote with the commonweal, and not private gain, in mind. What went on in 1859 was something altogether different: voting was still public, but all white men could vote, and nearly seventy per cent of them managed to do so in the congressional elections that year, pistols and fisticuffs notwithstanding. From an eighteenth-century point of view, how we vote now looks even stranger. Casting a ballot remains the defining act of American citizenship. But, especially since the election of 2000,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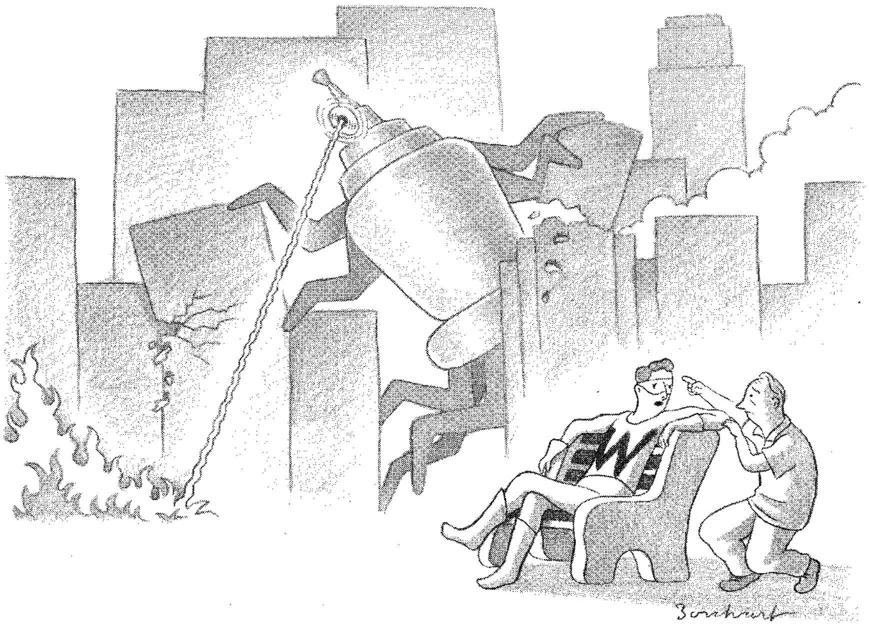

"Hey, I'm Whatever Man. I possess vast powers of indifference."

• •

with its precariously hanging chad, many people worry that voting in America is a shambles and even a sham, that the machinery of our democracy is broken, crippled by confusing, illegible, and deceptive ballots; vote-counting devices either rickety and outdated or new, gimmicky, and untested but, in any case, unreliable and by no means tamperproof; and a near total absence of national standards and federal oversight. In this fall's Presidential election, every citizen who is eighteen or older—except, in some states, prisoners and felons—will be eligible to vote. Somewhat more than half of us will turn up. We won't be clobbered, stabbed, or shot. We will not have to bring our own ballots. We will insist that how we vote be secret. The founders didn't plan for this. No one planned for it. There is no plan. It's patches all the way down.

Americans used to vote with their voices—viva voce—or with their hands or with their feet. Yea or nay. Raise your hand. All in favor of Jones, stand on this side of the town common; if you support Smith, line up over there. In the colonies, as in the mother country, casting a vote rarely required paper and pen. The word "ballot" comes from the Italian *ballotta*, or little ball, and a ballot often was a ball, or at least something ballish, like a pea or a pebble, or, not uncommonly, a bullet. Colonial Pennsylvanians commonly voted by tossing beans into a hat. Paper voting wasn't meant to conceal anyone's vote; it was just easier than counting beans. Our forebears considered casting a "secret ballot" cowardly, underhanded, and despicable; as one South Carolinian put it, voting secretly would "destroy that noble generous openness that is characteristick of an Englishman."

In 1634, the governor of Massachusetts was elected "by papers" for the first time; thirteen years later, a Bay Colony law dictated voting "by wrighting the names of the persons Elected." But, outside learned, literate New England, this would have been entirely impractical. Only very slowly did voting by paper grow common enough that the word "ballot" came to mean not a ball but a piece of paper. Well after American independence, elections remained widely the stuff of corn and beans and hands and feet.

The Constitution, drafted in 1787, left the conduct of elections up to the states: "The times, places and manner of holding elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations." Further than this limited federal oversight the framers would not go. And even this needed James Madison's insistence, during the Constitutional Convention, that "it was impossible to foresee all the abuses" that states might make of unimpeded power over the conduct of elections.

With the exception of Benjamin Franklin, who anticipated Malthus, the nation's founders could scarcely have imagined that the population of the United States, less than four million in 1790, would increase tenfold by 1870. Nor did they prophesy the party system. Above all, they could not have fathomed universal suffrage. In the first Presidential election, only six per cent of Americans were eligible to vote. And these men didn't elect George Washington; they voted only for delegates to the Electoral College, an institution established to further restrain the popular will. (The original proposal, at the Constitutional Convention, was for the President to be elected by Congress, called, in the debates, the "national legislature." A motion "to strike out 'National Legislature' & insert 'citizens of U.S.' " was defeated, with only Franklin's Pennsylvania dissenting. It was all but inconceivable that the people, even given limited suffrage, would elect the President directly. The election of the President by Congress, however, violated the separation of powers. The Electoral College, proposed after the defeat of the motion for direct election, was an ill-begotten compromise.)

The states, left to their own devices, adopted electoral methods best described as higgledy-piggledy, except that everyone agreed that Election Day ought to be a public holiday, involving plenty of stumping, debating, and parading. Some of the original state constitutions make mention of voting by ballot; some don't. The framers of New York's 1777 constitution, wondering whether "voting at elections by ballot would tend more to preserve the liberty and equal freedom of the people than voting viva voce," proposed a "fair experiment" with paper. In 1802, Ohio required voting by ballot in "all elections." By no means, however, did paper voting become universal. The citizens of Kentucky voted viva voce until 1891.

Early paper voting was, to say the least, a hassle. You had to bring your own ballot, a scrap of paper. You had to (a) remember and (b) know how to spell the name of every candidate and office. If "John Jones" was standing for election, and you wrote "Jon Jones," your vote

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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF A PLACE SO ARTISTICALLY, GASTRONOMICALLY, VITICULTURALLY, INTELLECTUALLY, MUSICALLY MAGNIFICENT THAT MANY PEOPLE WONDER IF A NICE CHUNK OF NEW YORK CITY DIDN'T BREAK OFF AND FLOAT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

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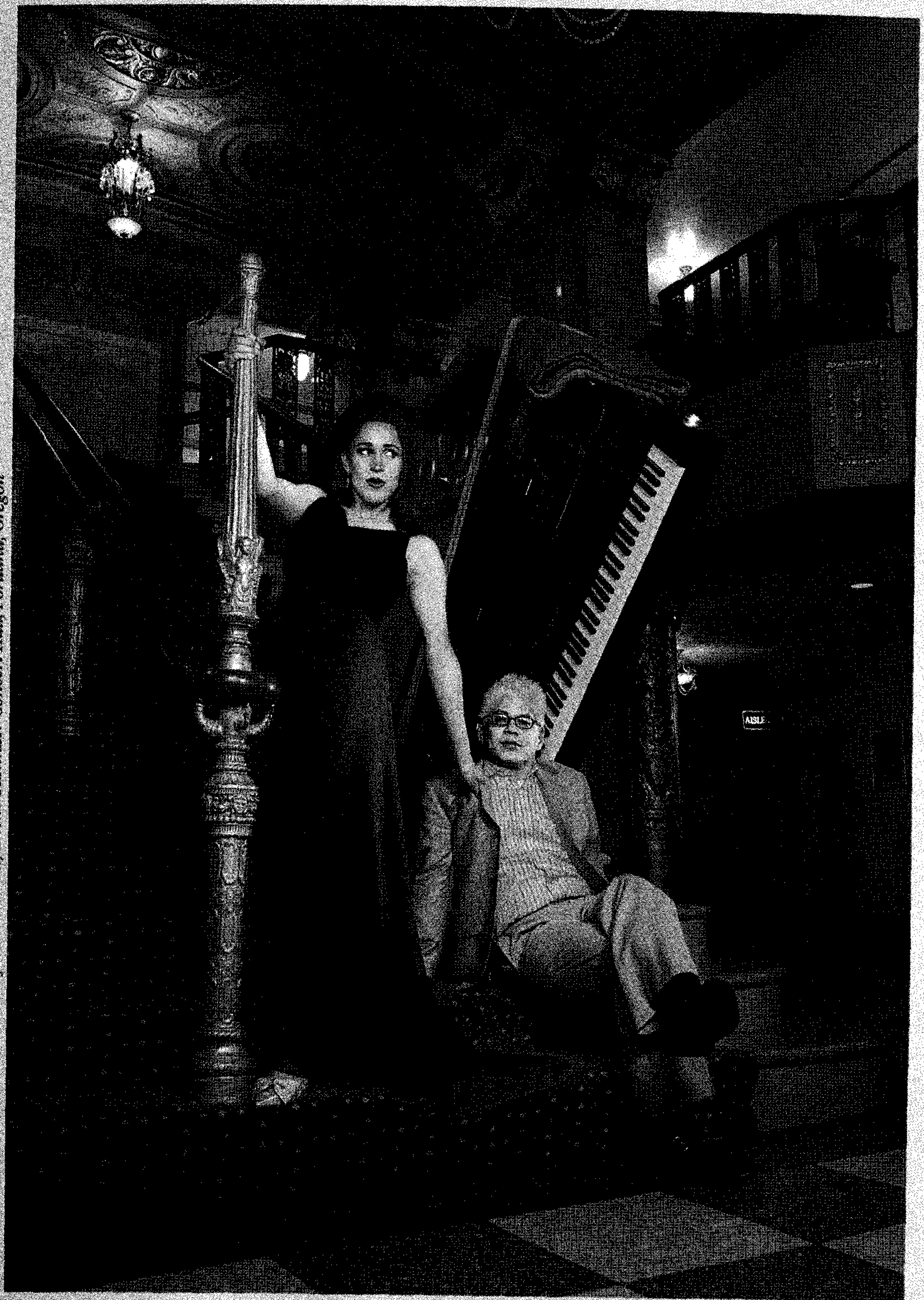

China Forbes and Thomas Lauderdale of Pink Martini, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland, Oregon

THE BOOK OF OREGON

THE OREGON ARTIST

THE TALE OF HOW ONE DAY, WHEN THE TOWERING TREES AND THE SNOWY GLACIERS WERE NOT PAYING ATTENTION, A CERTAIN STATE WOKE UP AND FOUND THAT IT HAD SPROUTED A WHOLE CROP OF EXTRAORDINARILY TALENTED AND, LET'S BE HONEST, UNCONVENTIONAL ARTISTS.

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And this is more or less what happened to a band called Pink Martini, whose bandleader and vocalist met at Harvard and dreamed that it might be possible to make a new yet timeless music that would make granddads tap their feet and toddlers dance and give girls of all ages chills like you get from romantic old movies where everyone is well-dressed and there's a decanter of whiskey and a piano in every room. And so they came together in Portland. After a while, the seeds of their music floated across the sea to Europe, and soon the whole world was clamoring for it.

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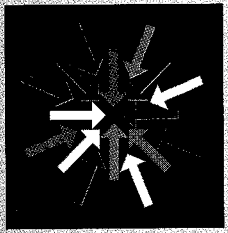

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could be thrown out. (If you doubt how difficult this is, try it. I disenfranchise myself at "Comptroller.") Shrewd partisans began bringing prewritten ballots to the polls, and handing them out with a coin or two. Doling out cash—the money came to be called "soap"—wasn't illegal; it was getting out the vote.

The eighteenth century's experiment in republicanism gradually gave way to the unruly exuberance of nineteenth-century democracy. New states entering the union adopted constitutions without any property qualifications for voting, putting pressure on older states to eliminate those restrictions. As suffrage expanded—by the time Andrew Jackson was elected President, in 1828, nearly all white men could vote—scrap voting had become a travesty, not least because the newest members of the electorate, poor men and immigrants, were the least likely to know how to write.

Political parties, whose rise to power was made possible by the rise of the paper ballot, stepped in. Party leaders began to print ballots, often in newspapers: either long strips, listing an entire slate, or pages meant to be cut in pieces, one for each candidate. At first, this looked to be illegal. In 1829, a Boston man named David Henshaw tried to cast as his ballot a sheet of paper on which were printed the names of fifty-five candidates. Election officials refused to accept it. Henshaw sued, arguing that he had been disenfranchised. When the case was heard before the state's Supreme Court, the decision turned on whether casting a printed ballot violated a clause in the state's 1780 constitution, requiring a written one. "It probably did not occur to the framers of the constitution," the Court observed, in a landmark ruling in Henshaw's favor, "that many of the towns might become so populous as to make it convenient to use printed votes." The Massachusetts constitution, only fifty years old, had already been outpaced by the times.

Printed ballots came to be called "party tickets," because they looked like train tickets (which is why, when we talk about someone who votes a single-party slate, we say that he "votes the party ticket"). The printing on ballots of a party symbol, like the Free Soilers' man-pushing-a-plow, meant that voters didn't need to know how to write, or even to read. Not surprisingly, the ticket system consolidated the power of the major parties. Curiously, it promoted insurgency, too: party malcontents could "bolt," or print their own ballots, listing an alternate slate of candidates; they could "knife" a candidate by stacking up a pile of tickets and slicing out his name; and they could distribute "pasters," strips of paper printed with the name of a candidate not on the party ticket, to be pasted over that of his opponent. (For this, polls were stocked with vats of paste.)

Undeniably, party tickets led to massive fraud and intimidation. A candidate had to pay party leaders a hefty sum to put his name on the ballot and to cover the costs of printing tickets, buying votes, and hiring thugs, called "shoulder-strikers," to tussle with voters. To make sure all that soap was paying off, ballots grew bigger, and more colorful, so bright-colored that even "vest-pocket voters"—men who went to the polls with their ballots crammed into their pockets—could barely hide their votes.

But wanting to hide those votes began to seem eminently reasonable to reformers both in the United States and in Britain, where suffrage had also been expanding. In 1830, the Scottish Benthamite James Mill argued for a secret ballot in order to curb the influence of landlords upon their tenants and factory owners upon their workers. The next year, Maine required that all ballots be printed on the same color paper, to protect voters trying to cast minority ballots in a polling place besieged by rowdy members of the majority. It didn't do much good. What honest man was ashamed of his vote? The secret ballot, the Virginian John Randolph insisted, "would make any nation a nation of scoundrels, if it did not find them so." In 1851, a Massachusetts legislature dominated by Free Soilers and Democrats mandated the use of envelopes, to be supplied by the Secretary of State. That didn't do much good, either. "To say that the citizen shall vote with a sealed bag, or not at all," critics argued, "is an act of despotism." In 1853, when the Massachusetts legislature changed hands, the new majority made envelopes optional, having accepted the argument that it was its duty to give every citizen the right "to vote as his fathers did, with an open ballot." By the time the House Committee on Elections investigated the contested 1859 Baltimore congressional election, jostling and

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brawling at the polls were to be expected and endured. (Women were not enfranchised until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, in 1920, although, as suffragettes argued, maybe if women had been allowed to vote earlier, Election Day would have been marked by more decorum.) "Were the voters of the 11th ward men of ordinary courage?" a committee member asked a Baltimorean who had only this honest answer: "Men of ordinary courage, extraordinary courage, and some with no courage at all."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, someone came up with a startling idea. What if governments were to provide the ballots?

The precise origins of this idea are somewhat murky. An electoral law, with ballot clauses written by a jurist named Henry Samuel Chapman, was passed in Victoria, Australia, in March of 1856. (A similar law, championed by Francis S. Dutton, was passed in South Australia the following month, and whether Chapman or Dutton or someone else is more justifiably dubbed the Father of the Ballot has been a matter strenuously debated.) Victoria's Electoral Act of 1856 minutely detailed the conduct of elections, requiring that election officials print ballots and erect a booth or hire rooms, to be divided into compartments where voters could mark those ballots secretly, and barring anyone else from entering the polling place.

This, of course, is exactly how we vote in the United States today. Not that there hasn't been tinkering: in 1877, Western Australia introduced the placement of an empty square next to a candidate's name, requiring voters to indicate their selections by marking an "X" in the box. (Chapman's law required crossing out the names of everyone you *didn't* want to vote for.) Then there was a clever scam called the Tasmanian Dodge: get your hands on a blank ballot, fill it out, and pay someone to cast it while smuggling out another blank, and you can vote as many times as you like without ever casting a ballot. (The dodge was eventually defeated by numbering or stamping the ballots, a system in place, in one form or another, in every American precinct today.)

When the Australian ballot was propounded in Britain, James Mill's son, John Stuart Mill, became its most articulate opponent. The younger Mill first took up the subject in 1859, just months before George Kyle's brother died in Baltimore. Voting, Mill insisted, is not a right but a trust: if it were a right, who could blame a voter for selling it? Every man's vote must be public for the same reason that votes on the floor of the legislature are public. If a congressman or a Member of Parliament could conceal his vote, would we not expect him to vote badly, in his own interest and not in ours? A secret vote is, by definition, a selfish vote. Only if a man votes "under the eye and criticism of the public" will he put public interest above his own.

Mill's argument was widely debated, but met with a practical-minded reply: even if voting is a public trust (which not all of Mill's opponents granted), voters need to exercise it privately to exercise it well, because the electorate, unlike the legislature, consists of men of unequal rank. The powerless will always be prevailed upon by the powerful; only secrecy can protect them from bribery and bullying. The British Parliament adopted the Australian ballot in 1872.

The most zealous American champion of the Australian ballot, Henry George, sailed to Australia in 1855, when he was fifteen, as a foremast boy. He arrived at San Francisco in 1858; three years later he married an Australian. He first advocated the Australian ballot in December, 1871, a few months after the New York *Times* began publishing its investigation into the gross corruption of elections in New York City under the party boss, William Magear Tweed. (In 1868, a Presidential-election year, Tweed's amply rewarded "repeaters" cast more than fifty thousand illegal votes.) Without the Australian ballot, George wrote, "we might almost think soberly of the propriety of putting up our offices at auction."

George had a point. In San Francisco, party bosses handed out "quarter eagles," coins worth $2.50. In Indiana, tens of thousands of men sold their suffrages for no more than a sandwich, a swig, and a fiver. In an 1878 essay in *The North American Review*, the eminent historian Francis Parkman declared universal suffrage a failure: when a man "cares not a farthing for the gen-

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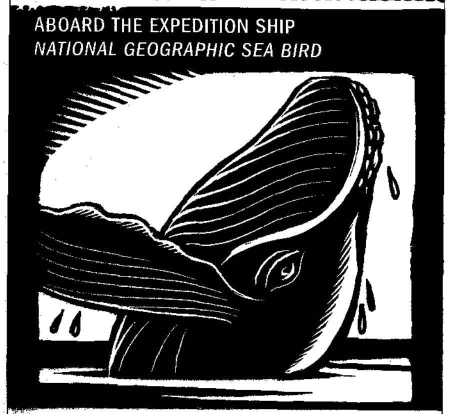
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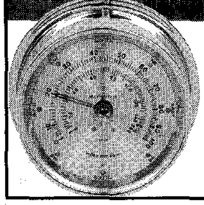
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eral good, and will sell his vote for a dollar," Parkman insisted, "his vote becomes a public pest." Five years later, George, writing in the same magazine, granted that elections had become a national scandal, but rejected Parkman's conclusion "that democracy is therefore condemned, or that universal suffrage must be abandoned."

In 1886, George ran for mayor of New York. He lost, but the United Labor Party, which nominated him, became the first national party to demand the Australian ballot. Two years later, in Kentucky, a state still voting viva voce, the legislature attempted the reform in Louisville. After the voting that year, an observer wrote to *The Nation*, "The election last Tuesday was the first municipal election I have ever known which was not bought outright." In 1888, Massachusetts passed the nation's first statewide Australian-ballot law. (It served as the model for nearly all that followed.) That success put pressure on David Hill, the Democratic governor of New York, who vetoed an Australian-ballot bill three times, even after fourteen men carried to the floor of the New York legislature a petition weighing half a ton. (One of his arguments was that its restriction on campaigning at the polls violated freedom of speech.) But New York, which finally adopted the reform in 1890, proved the only state to deliberate at such length. Elsewhere, state legislatures swiftly adopted the reform, persuaded, no doubt, of the need to clean up elections but also, in some places, eager to solve the "problem" of the expansion of the suffrage by restricting it.

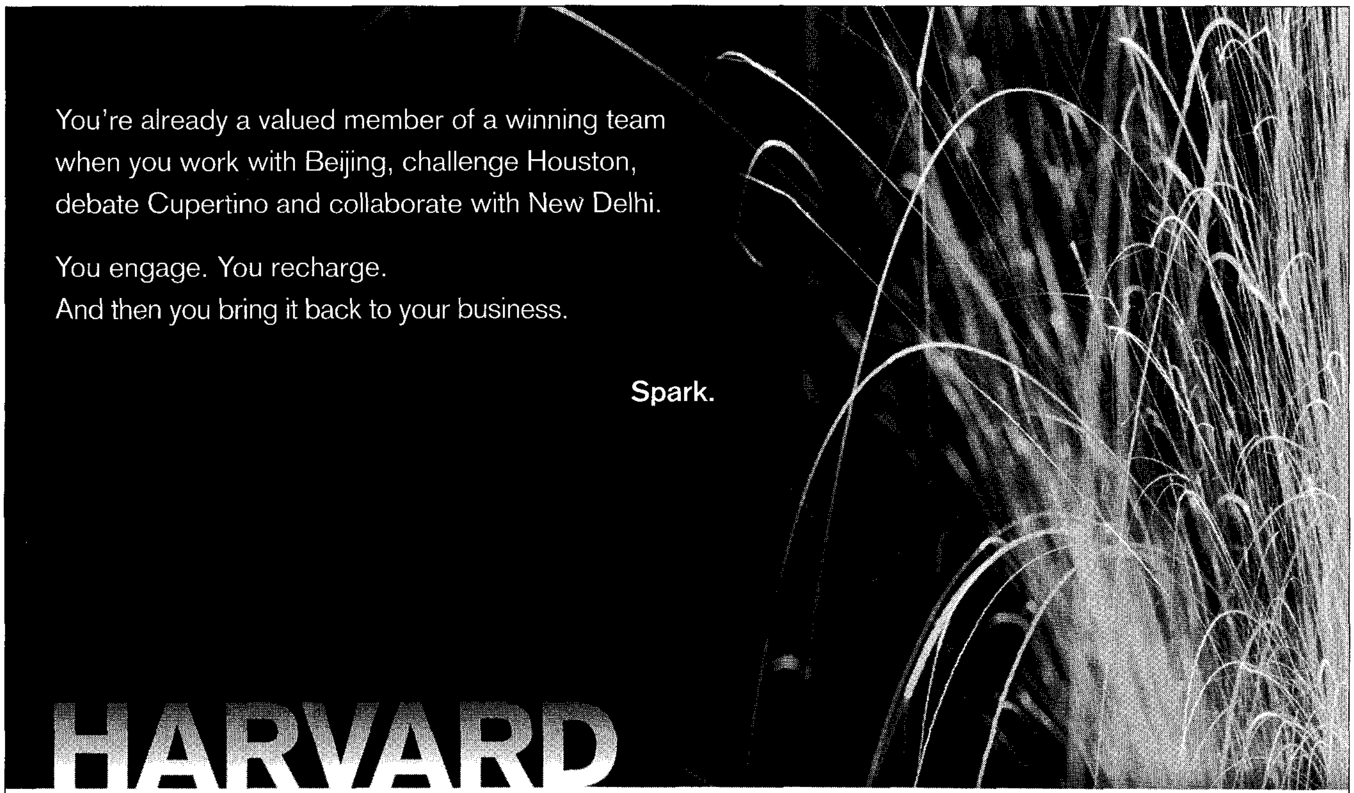
A government-printed ballot that voters had, even minimally, to read made it much harder for immigrants, former slaves, and the uneducated poor to vote. Some precincts formally imposed and selectively administered literacy tests; others resorted to ranker chicanery. (In 1894, one Virginian congressional district printed its ballots in Gothic letters.) In the South, where black men had been granted suffrage in 1870, by the Fifteenth Amendment, it was fear of the black Republican majority that led many former Confederate states to adopt the reform in the first place. As a Democratic campaign song heard in Arkansas in 1892 put it:

> The Australian ballot works like a charm,
> It makes them think and scratch,
> And when a Negro gets a ballot
> He has certainly got his match.

The year after Arkansas passed its Australian-ballot law, the percentage of black men who managed to vote dropped from seventy-one to thirty-eight.

By 1896, Americans in thirty-nine out of forty-five states cast secret, government-printed ballots. The turnout, nationwide? Eighty per cent, which was about what it had been since the eighteen-thirties. It has been falling, more or less steadily, ever since.

On Election Day this November, I'll walk around the corner to vote in the basement gymnasium of a neighborhood elementary school, beneath a pair of basketball hoops. At a table just inside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the gym, a precinct volunteer will hand me a piece of white paper about the size and weight of a file folder. I'll enter a booth built on a frame of aluminum poles, tug shut behind me a red-white-and-blue striped curtain, and, with a black marker tied to a string, I'll mark my ballot, awed, as always, by the gravity, the sovereignty, of the moment. With the stroke of a pen, we, mere citizens, become We the People.

Except for the basketball hoops, much about how I'll vote this November, about how most Americans will vote, was laid out in an Act to Provide for Printing and Distributing Ballots, passed in Massachusetts, my home state, in 1888. Henry George wanted all men to vote *better;* Francis Parkman believed that only the "best men" should vote. The Australian ballot did some of what both men wanted. It can scarcely be said to have removed money from elections (money has found plenty of other ways in), but it did provide an elegant solution to problems created by the sudden and dramatic expansion of the electorate in a time of vast economic inequality. It brought voting indoors, contained it in compartments, and made it safer, quieter, more orderly, more like an assembly line. Many kinds of corruption, violence, and intimidation ended. George Kyle, for one, would have been relieved not to have to walk to the polls with that bundle of ballots tucked under his arm.

But the reform's success was vexed. Beyond effectively restricting suffrage (at least before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, outlawing literacy tests), the Australian ballot dampened popular enthusiasm for voting by prohibiting the staging, at the polls, of heated political debates and ending the celebration of Election Day as a boisterous public holiday. (This year, an unusually high turnout is expected, but high, by our standards, would be more than sixty per cent. And if four out of ten of the nation's eligible voters fail to turn up at the polls it won't be for lack of ordinary courage.) It also contributed to the erosion of the notion of voting as a public trust. And, crucially, it shifted the American conversation about voting from a fundamental debate about democracy to the profit-driven advocacy of technology. Machines for casting and counting votes date to the eighteen-eighties; the first punch-card-machine patent was granted in January of 1889; the first mechanical-lever voting machine was patented the following November, and débuted in 1892. (Like printed ballots, machine-cast ballots were, at first, challenged on the ground that they were unconstitutional.) Machines, of course, can break. Machines can be made to fail. The 2002 Help America Vote Act provided more than three billion dollars in federal funds for the purchase of electronic voting machines. In the 2004 Presidential elections, many voters waited in line for hours, only to be confronted with machines that proved difficult to use and may have switched or deleted their votes. In 2005, security experts at BlackBoxVoting.org, a watchdog group, swapped out the actual vote count in a Diebold AccuVote touch-screen machine for a set of fake results in less than four minutes, using nothing more than a memory card. (Diebold Election Systems changed its name to Premier Election Solutions, Inc.) Computer scientists and computer-security experts have called for a return to paper voting. Tens of thousands of electronic voting machines, purchased since 2002, have been thrown out. (Earlier this year, Florida sent thirty thousand touch-screen machines to a recycler.) This November, nearly sixty per cent of American voters are expected to cast their votes on paper ballots.

FARLEY KATZ

"So far, no one's seemed to notice."

To the extent that Americans today see how we vote as a problem, we tend to think it needs a technological fix, of one sort or another, whether it's better, faster, more secure machines, a return to the paper ballot, or maybe even Internet voting, which would strip from the act of casting a ballot its very last vestiges of civic occasion and public office. But the problem, if there is a problem, is historical, too. That we grant our rulers the right to govern us is the genius of eighteenth-century republicanism. That we all can vote is a consequence of nineteenth-century politics. That we vote secretly is the Gilded Age's answer to universal manhood suffrage. How our votes are counted is, generally, a product of twentieth-century technology. (My precinct uses an optical scanner invented in the nineteen-sixties.) It really is patches all the way down. In places—like the Electoral College—the patchwork gets pretty shoddy.

Still, a patch, even a patch upon a patch, isn't necessarily bad. Times change. If the founders had written more about elections and less about a well-regulated militia, we'd have better gun-control laws, but we might still be voting with corn and beans, clamoring on the town common. Corn and beans we can do without. More hue and cry, though, we could maybe use. Sometimes, inside that tiny booth, behind that red-white-and-blue curtain, it's just a little too quiet. ♦

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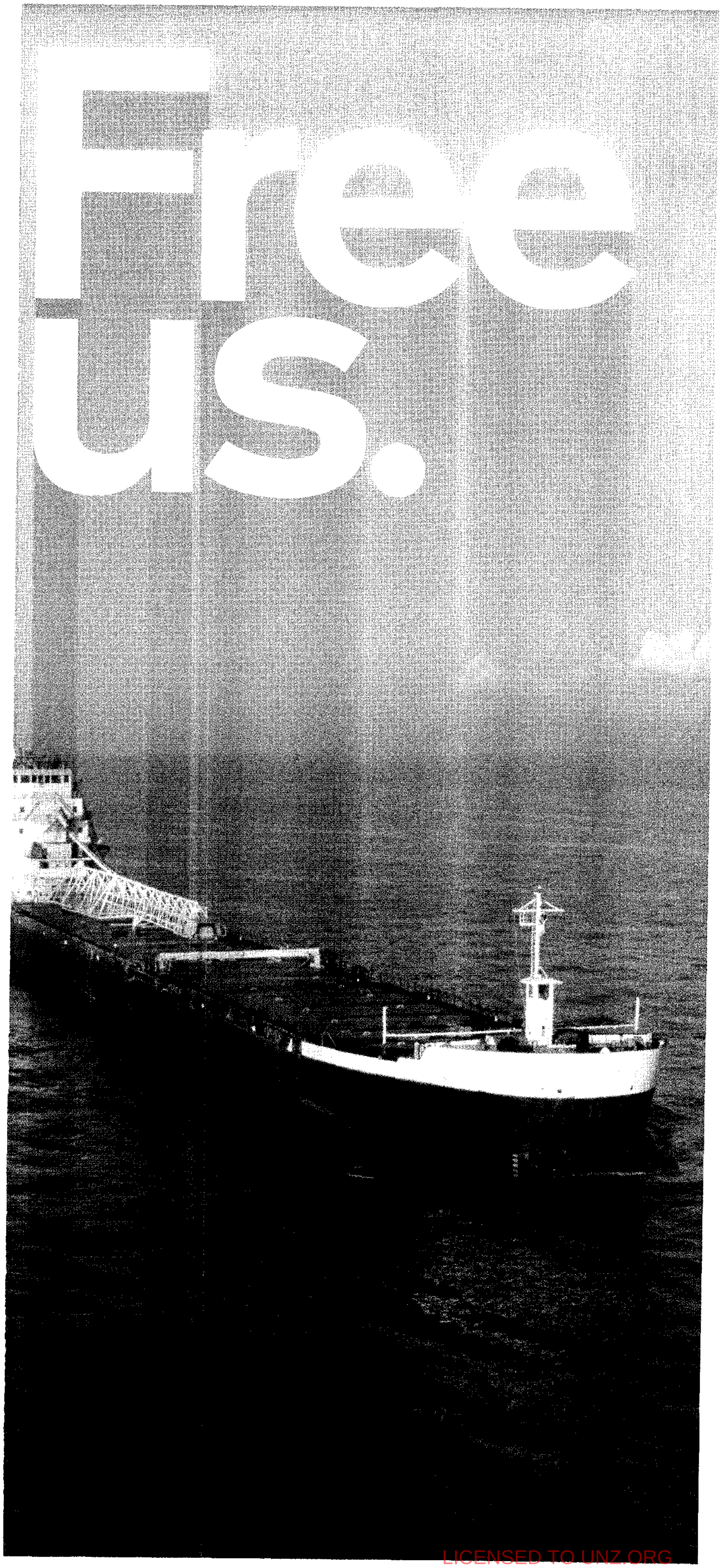

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FICTION

GOLD BOY, EMERALD GIRL

BY YIYUN LI

ADRIAN TOMINE

He was raised by his mother alone, as she was by her father. She wondered if his mother, who had set up their date, had told him about that.

Siyu was thirty-eight, and the man, Hanfeng, was forty-four. Siyu's father, after supporting her through college, had remarried, choosing a woman thirty years his junior. The woman had a young son from her previous marriage, whom Siyu's father had taken on as his responsibility. The boy was now in his last year of high school, and Siyu, having told her father many times that he deserved peace and simplicity, maintained a respectful distance from his new family. Each year she spent New Year's Eve, and sometimes other holidays, with Hanfeng's mother, who had been her zoology professor in college. There was no way to predict when the older woman would be in the mood to invite Siyu, so she tried to keep herself uncommitted, which meant that most of the holidays she spent alone.

"Professor Dai must miss her students these days," Siyu said after she and Hanfeng had exchanged greetings, although she knew that it was not the students that his mother missed but the white skulls of mammals and birds on her office shelves, the drawers filled with scalpels and clamps and tweezers that she had cleaned and maintained with care, and the fact that she could mask her indifference to the human species with her devotion to animals. The first time Siyu had seen Professor Dai, on a campus tour during the opening week of college, the older woman had been following a strutting owl down a dimly lit hallway; she paid little attention to the group of new students, and stooped slightly the whole time, as if she were the mother of a toddler and had to watch out for minor accidents. When a boy stepped over to take a closer look at the owl, she scooped up the bird in her arms and glared at him before striding away.

"Retirement is a strange thing for her," Hanfeng said. His mother had always despised women who grabbed every opportunity to matchmake, but within days of his return to China she had mentioned a former student she thought he should meet. His mother did not say much else, but he could sense that it was marriage that she was thinking about. Twenty years of living away from her had not changed that in him: he always knew what was on her mind before she said it, and he wondered if she was ever aware of that.

The teahouse where Hanfeng and Siyu were meeting, at a hillside pavilion in the Summer Palace, had been chosen by his mother, and she had suggested that they also take a long stroll along the lakefront. It was early March. The day turned out overcast and windy, and secretly Hanfeng hoped that the wind would not die down, so they could forgo the romantic walk. He wondered if Siyu was wishing for a different scenario. He could not yet read much from her face. She smiled courteously as she gave him a few facts about the tea she had ordered for them both, White Peony, but the smile and the words seemed to come with effort, as if her interest in interacting with him could easily fade. Her body was slender, and her hair, black with noticeable strands of gray, was kept straight and at shoulder length. He wondered why the woman, who was beautiful in an unassuming way, had never married.

"Do you find Beijing a different city now?" Siyu said. It must be a question that he was asked all the time, but it would not do anyone any harm, she thought. It was not the first time that Siyu had been set up with a stranger—since she had turned twenty, neighbors and acquaintances, pitying her for not

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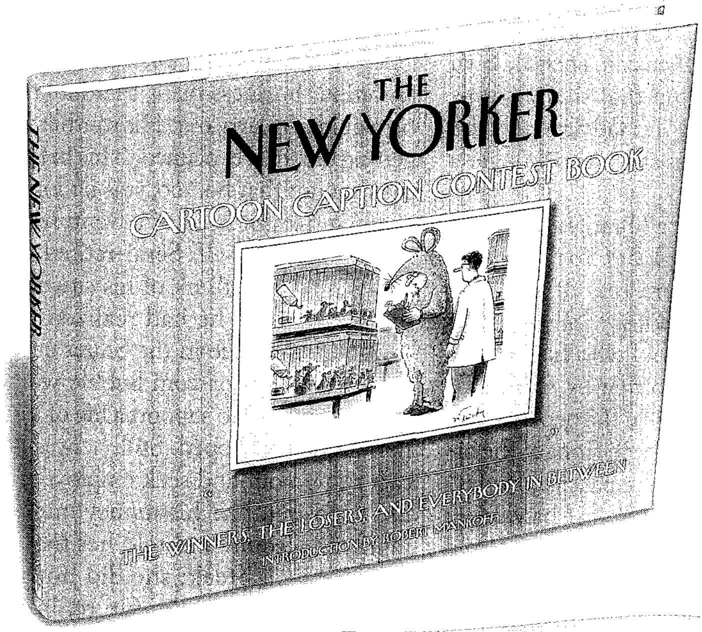
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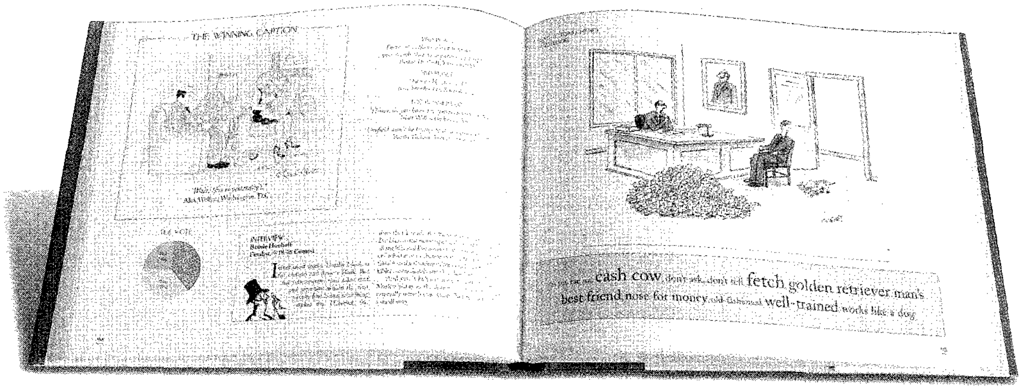
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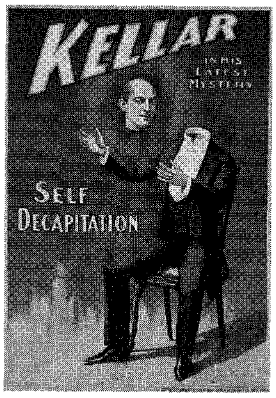

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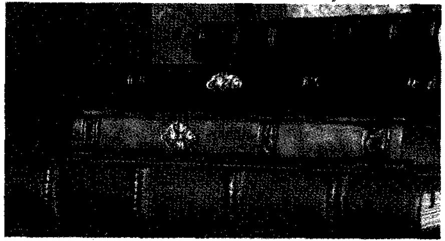

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having a mother to fuss over her future, had taken it as their responsibility to find a husband for her—but with those men she had known from the beginning that she would not bother trying to impress them. Over the years, she had developed a reputation as unmatchable, and nowadays only the most persistent of the matchmakers would mention a widower or a divorcé, in his fifties or sometimes sixties, as a possible solution. The first time such a prospect was presented in an enthusiastic speech, Siyu had the odd feeling that she was now expected to marry her father; only later did she realize that she was no longer a young woman.

Siyu worked as a librarian in a zoology institute, and her life had not changed much from that of a college student. In her mind, she might still be the eighteen-year-old who had set her alarm clock early so that by six o'clock she would be sitting on the bench under an ancient gingko tree in front of the biology building. At half past six, Professor Dai would arrive on her bicycle—a tall, rusty, heavy-built one that would have better suited a peasant or a street peddler—and she would nod at Siyu almost imperceptibly as she locked it up. It had taken two years for Professor Dai to cross the courtyard and ask Siyu about the thick volume that she had been reading every day. Charles Dickens, Siyu had replied, and then added that she was trying to memorize "Great Expectations." Professor Dai nodded, expressing neither surprise nor curiosity at the task that had already made Siyu an eccentric in the eyes of her classmates. Siyu did not explain to them that her grandfather—her mother's father, whom she had never met—had once memorized volumes of Dickens on the small balcony of a Shanghai flat, a feat that had eventually led him, before the liberation, to a high position in a bank run by Englishmen. It was Dickens who had in the end killed Siyu's mother: as a daughter of the British capitalists' loyal lapdog, she had hanged herself when her own daughter was four months of age, barely old enough to be weaned.

Hanfeng looked at Siyu's face, detecting a familiar absent-mindedness. His mother, too, asked him questions to which she seemed scarcely interested in knowing the answers. He wondered if this happened to women who lived by themselves. "Too many cars," he replied, nonetheless—the standard response he gave when asked about his impression of Beijing these days. "I miss the bicycles."

Hanfeng had returned from the States a month before. He had told his former colleagues in San Francisco about his intention to settle down in China, and they had joked about moving with him and becoming the forty-niners of the new gold rush. He had gone along with the joke, making up ambitious business plans that he knew he would not carry out. His mother was getting old, he'd explained to his friends; the thought that he, too, was no longer a young man in need of adventures he had kept to himself. Semi-retired was how he liked to think of his situation, but within days he had realized that what he had made in the States at the tail end of the dot-com bubble would not be sufficient to support a life of idleness, as he had hoped. Still, he was not eager to go out and seek employment. He deposited half his money into his mother's account and told her that he would take a break; she did not ask about his plans for the future, in the same way that she had not questioned his decision to leave or to come home.

At seventy-one, his mother was as independent as ever, and she loathed most activities that a woman her age enjoyed: taking morning walks with a companion, gossiping and bargaining at the marketplace, watching soap operas in the afternoon. Hanfeng had never wondered how his mother spent her days in retirement until his return, when, all of a sudden, the three-bedroom flat that must have seemed empty to her became crowded. He had been the one to cook for the two of them when he was a boy, dividing the meals in half and eating his portion alone; his mother, her preoccupation with her research a ready excuse, had eaten at odd hours then. Since his return, he had taken over the cooking again, and, now that neither of them was eager to go out into the world to fulfill any duty, they ate together.

The idea of renting a flat had occurred to Hanfeng, but as soon as the thought was formed he dismissed it as a waste: he had left for America right after college, a move intended to claim a place for himself—a whole continent, in the

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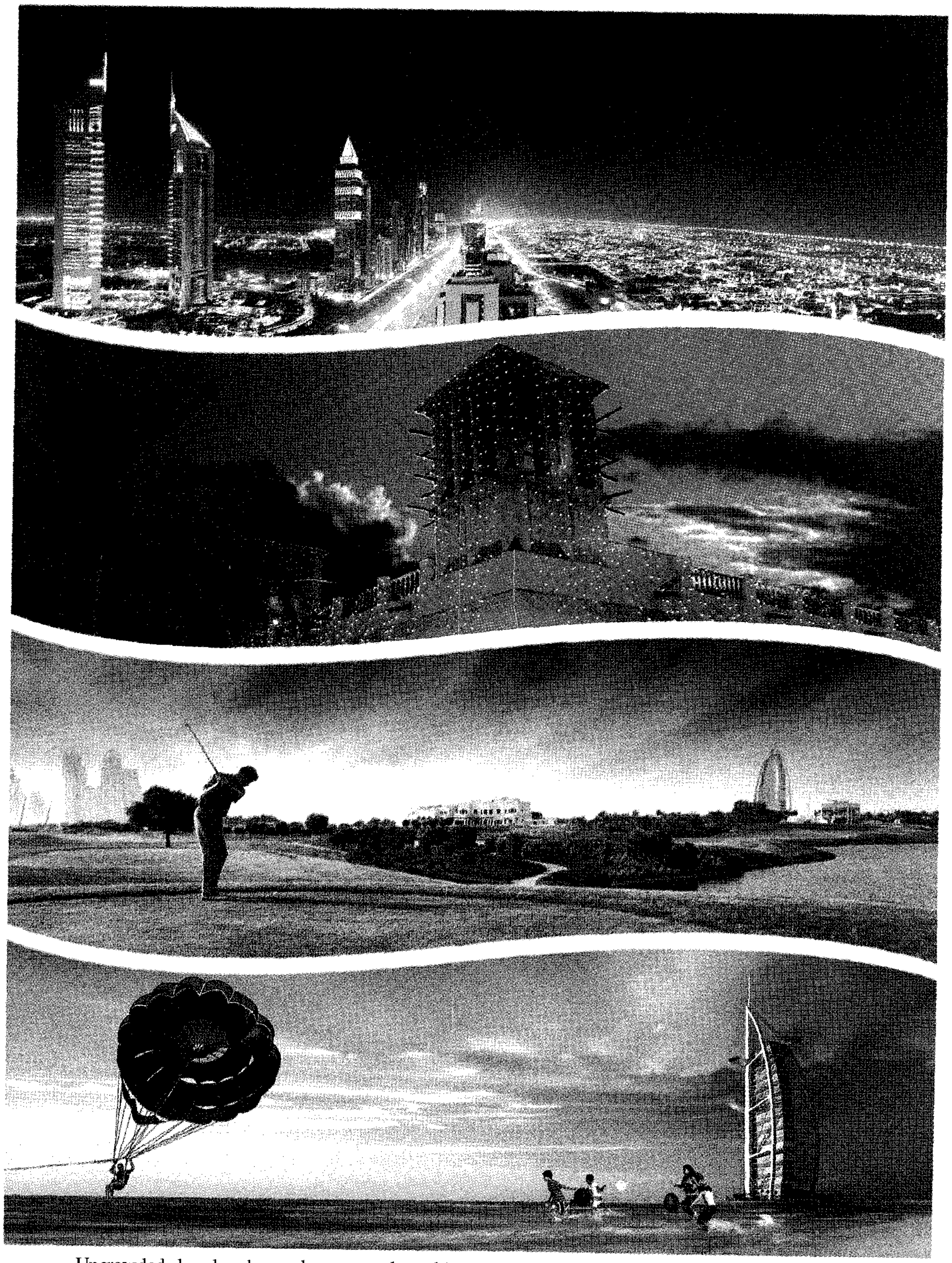

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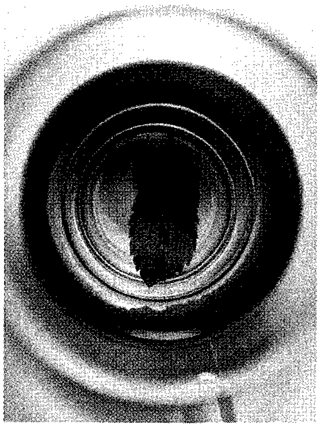

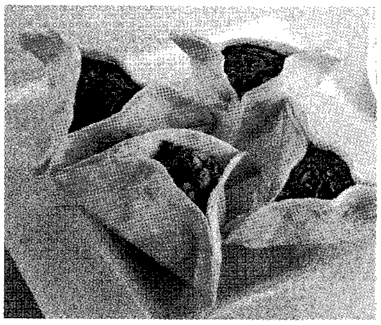

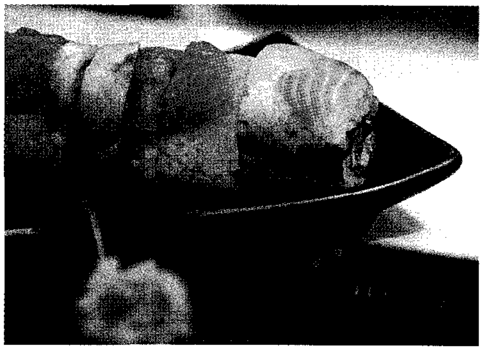

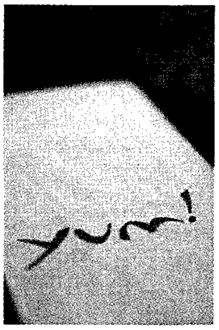

Courting the Global Gourmet

With Dubai's large expatriate population and growing appeal to visitors worldwide, it's no wonder that its dining scene reflects a mix of influences from around the globe.

From award-winning hotel restaurants—the main venues where local law allows alcohol to be served—to the many independent cafés and ethnic eateries that win raves of their own, a trip to Dubai transports diners on a culinary world tour.

Traditional Arabic cuisine reflects the region's history as a center of trade, with imported spices, nuts, and dried fruits accenting dishes made with roasted meats, vegetables, and rice. Lebanese meze or starters like hummus and baba ghanoush are standard Arabian fare; a longtime favorite for these dishes is **Al Qasr**, at the Dubai Marine Beach Resort & Spa.

For traditional ambience, **Bastakiah Nights** in Bur Dubai draws crowds to its intimate courtyard to enjoy dishes like the mixed grill of barbecued meats. A new restaurant, **az.u.r** at The Harbour Hotel & Residence, specializes in organic Mediterranean cuisine, drawing on influences from Spain, Morocco, France, Lebanon, and Italy.

Another Dubai specialty is seafood, including lobster, *hammour* (grouper), tuna, and red snapper, often paired with an aquatic view. **The Aquarium** at the Dubai Creek Golf & Yacht Club serves fresh seafood in a dining room featuring a floor-to-ceiling fish tank as well as spectacular views.

Pierchic, a stylish seafood favorite at the Al Qasr hotel, sits atop a wooden pier jutting into the Persian Gulf with views of the Burj Al Arab. This skyscraper boasts its own immersive dining experience, the **Al Mahara** restaurant, entered via a simulated submarine ride.

Foreigners have brought their own cuisines to Dubai, with Indian restaurants carving out a popular niche. They run the gamut from high-end establishments like **Ashiana**, at the Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, and **Indego**, at the Grosvenor House hotel, to more casual options known for spicy affordable curries in the Karama district.

Eastern influences also abound, like the Thai favorite **Lemongrass**, which specializes in seafood dishes such as prawns in a red curry sauce. **Miyako**, located near the fish market, is an upscale Japanese restaurant at the Hyatt Regency hotel, while **Zheng He's** serves creative Chinese delicacies—such as squid-ink dumplings—at the Madinat Jumeirah resort. Pakistani, Moroccan, Mexican, Italian, and Spanish cuisines are just a handful of the other tastes diners can enjoy in Dubai.

No restaurant roundup would be complete without a mention of British chef Gordon Ramsay's **Verre.** This elegant French restaurant at the Hilton Dubai Creek offers one of the top dining experiences in Dubai. From the whimsical chef's surprises served before the meal to the decadent desserts, like lemongrass crème brûlée, Verre exemplifies Dubai's growing reputation for world-renowned international cuisine.

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end, as in twenty years he had drifted from New York to Montreal, then Vancouver, and later San Francisco—and a life that had to be lived away from a mother; but with the return to China he no longer felt the urgency to have his own place. Freedom is like restaurant food, he had told an old friend in the States, and one can lose one's appetite for even the best restaurants. Pure nonsense, replied his friend, who, unlike Hanfeng, had long ago settled down with a partner, a house, and two dogs, and talked of adopting a baby. Take a break, he had said, urging Hanfeng to return to California after he had refreshed himself with his homemade dumplings and noodles. Hanfeng, however, could envision himself living a bachelor's life in his mother's flat, reading the same newspapers and comparing notes on the stories that interested them both, wandering freely through the flat when she went out for her piano lessons twice a week.

The piano was the only thing that kept his mother actively engaged with the world. Soon after Hanfeng's return, she had asked him to go to a recital she was playing in, at a local music school. It was attended by men and women Hanfeng's age, who seemed nervous when their well-trained and nicely dressed children took the stage. His mother was the only one who went up without a puppetlike show. She gazed at the sheets of music for a long moment, then started to pound on the keys with a seriousness that took Hanfeng by surprise. He had thought the piano was merely a retirement pastime for his mother, and had protested mildly when she mentioned that her goal was to be good enough one day to play four-hand with him. Hanfeng had not told her that he was no longer playing, even though a rented piano had always been the first piece of furniture to fill an empty apartment in each city he had moved to. Small children giggled in the audience, and a few older ones smirked, pitying the old woman for her stiff arthritic fingers that would never be as good and agile as theirs. Some parents shook their heads at their children disapprovingly, and it occurred to Hanfeng that he was becoming a parent for his mother, that he would be the one to protect her from the hostility of the world.

The thought left him baffled. His mother had always been a headstrong woman, and, with her grayish-white mane and unsmiling face, she appeared as regal and intimidating as she had ever been. Still, seeing her through other people's eyes, Hanfeng realized that all that made her who she was—the decades of solitude in her widowhood, her coldness to the prying eyes of people who tried to mask their nosiness with friendliness, and her faith in the notion of living one's own life without having to go out of one's way for other people—could be deemed pointless and laughable. Perhaps the same could be said of any living creature: a caterpillar chewing on a leaf, unaware of the beak of an approaching bird; an egret mesmerized by its reflection in a pond, as if it were the master of the universe; or Hanfeng's own folly of repeating the same pattern of hope and heartbreak, hoping despite heartbreak.

Siyu asked a few more questions, and Hanfeng replied. When there was nothing much left to say, he curled his fingers around the teacup and studied its shape, and Siyu pictured him as a young boy, spreading his slender fingers on the cold keys of a piano. His mother must have told him, when he complained about the open windows in the winter, that playing would keep the blood circulating in his hands. Siyu did not know why she imagined that; it was as unfounded as all the other things she had made up about him. In Professor Dai's flat, there were framed snapshots of Hanfeng, playing in piano contests at five, eight, ten, fifteen. There were snapshots of him when he had first arrived in America, with his bright-colored T-shirt, long and flying hair, and broad smile, as picturesque and unreal as the Statue of Liberty in the background.

Siyu had been eighteen when she first saw those photographs, when she was sent as a representative from her class to deliver a New Year's present to Professor Dai. No one had wanted that job; Professor Dai's coldness was known to be hurtful, and it had made sense that Siyu, with her mild eccentricity, would be the one chosen. But that day, to Siyu's surprise, Professor Dai had not simply dismissed her from the doorway, even though she had immediately placed the present, a framed painting of a golden carp, next to the wastebasket. Professor Dai had invited Siyu into the flat, moved the papers that covered the dining table onto the piano bench, and let Siyu sit

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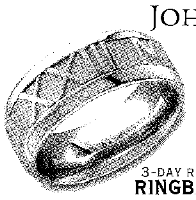
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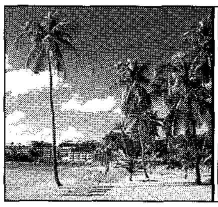
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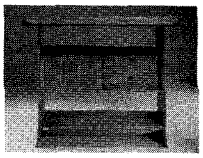
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while she went to the kitchen to make tea. Her son was the one who played the piano, Professor Dai answered when Siyu asked, and pointed out the pictures of Hanfeng. Very vaguely, Siyu had thought that he was the kind of boy she would like to have as a boyfriend, a prize badge that she could wear to make other girls jealous. Years later, she knew it was not the thought of the boy that had made her wait on the bench outside the biology building in the mornings during college; nor was he the reason she continued to befriend Professor Dai in a manner allowed by the older woman. Occasionally, Siyu would carefully study the pictures of Hanfeng in Professor Dai's flat, and when they ran out of things to say about animals she would ask about his life in America. When Professor Dai called and asked her to meet Hanfeng, Siyu wondered if the matchmaking had come as a result of a beguiling impression she had left of her interest in a good-looking bachelor.

The waitress came to offer a fresh pot of tea. Hanfeng turned to Siyu and asked her if she was ready to leave. They had spent almost an hour talking, and he had fulfilled his mother's wish without humiliating the woman with his lack of interest. Siyu looked out the window at the willow trees, their branches waving like unruly hair in the wind. Not a great day for a walk, Hanfeng said. Siyu agreed, then asked him if he needed a ride.

"I'll take a cab home," he said.

"I'm driving past your mother's place, in any case," Siyu said. Her own flat, a small studio that she rented from a retired couple, was only minutes from Professor Dai's flat, but Siyu thought she would appear too eager if she mentioned that.

Hanfeng wished that he had made up an excuse—a lunch with a friend in another district; an exhibition or a film to see—but it was too late to correct himself now.

A week later, Hanfeng's mother asked him if he planned to see Siyu again. They had finished their breakfast, and were reading that morning's newspapers, plates and bowls scattered on the table between them. Hanfeng's mother did not raise her eyes from the page as she asked, but he knew the question was not as haphazard as it seemed. Should he? he replied.

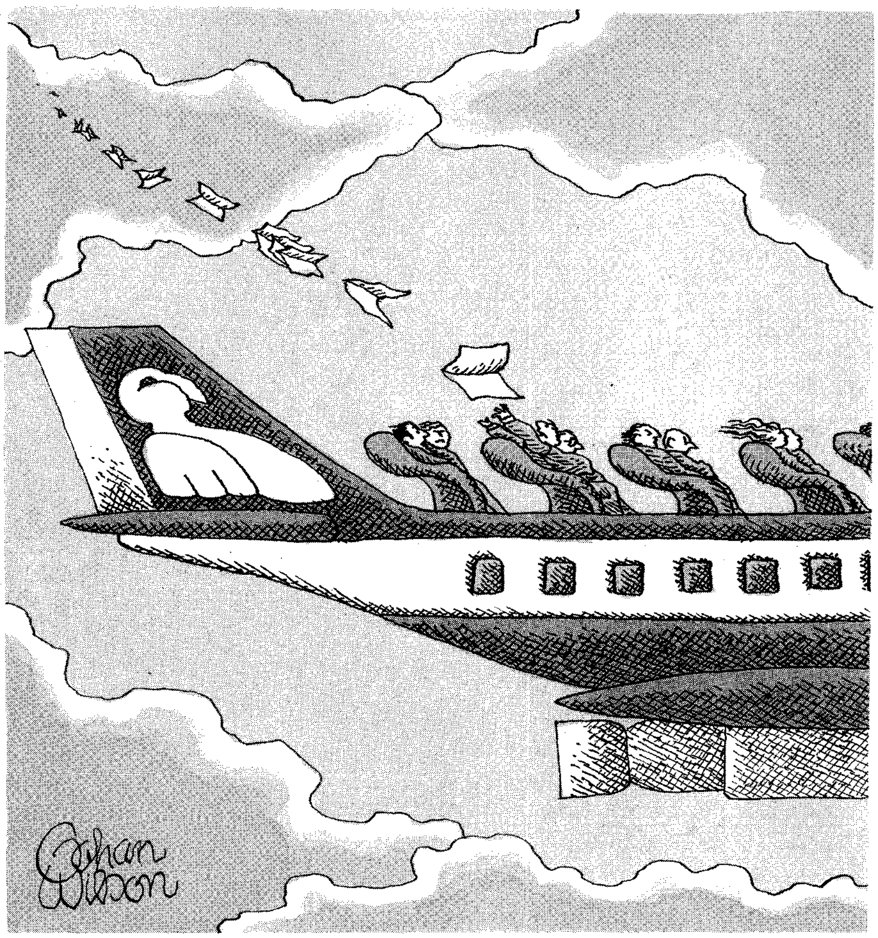
"Do you dislike her?"

It took more than an hour over tea for him to say that he disliked a woman, Hanfeng thought, but he just shook his head slightly. He was not surprised by his mother's question. *Do you dislike piano?* she had asked, when he wanted to give up the instrument at twelve for games that he could play with boys his age; *Do you dislike engineering?*, when he thought of pursuing a literature degree in college rather than the one she had chosen for him. Before he left China, she told him that she might not have been a good mother in the worldly sense, but she considered herself successful in giving him two things: practical skills with which to earn a living, and music as the only trustworthy companion and consolation for his soul. Twenty-three, and in love with a childhood friend who was dating a chirpy girl, Hanfeng did not believe that either of his mother's gifts would in any way contribute to his happiness. America, at first glance, seemed a happy enough place, and when his friend called with the news of his engagement Hanfeng sought out companions. All he wanted was to have some fun, he replied when more was asked of him; "Have fun"—wasn't that the phrase that replaced words of farewell in many Americans' lexicon? But eventually the reply came back to taunt him: I thought we would have some fun and that's all, his last lover had said, a Chinese boy, a new immigrant, as Hanfeng had once been, whom Hanfeng had helped support through college.

He should ask Siyu out to a movie, his mother suggested, or a concert. When he showed a lukewarm reaction, she said, "Or ask her to have dinner with us here."

"Wouldn't that be too quick?" Hanfeng said. Even though Siyu had been introduced to him by his mother, a dinner invitation, after meeting only once, seemed to imply an approval of sorts from both his mother and himself.

"She is not a stranger," his mother replied, and proceeded to check the calendar on the kitchen wall. Saturday was a good day, she said, and when Hanfeng questioned Siyu's availability at such short notice his concerns were dis-



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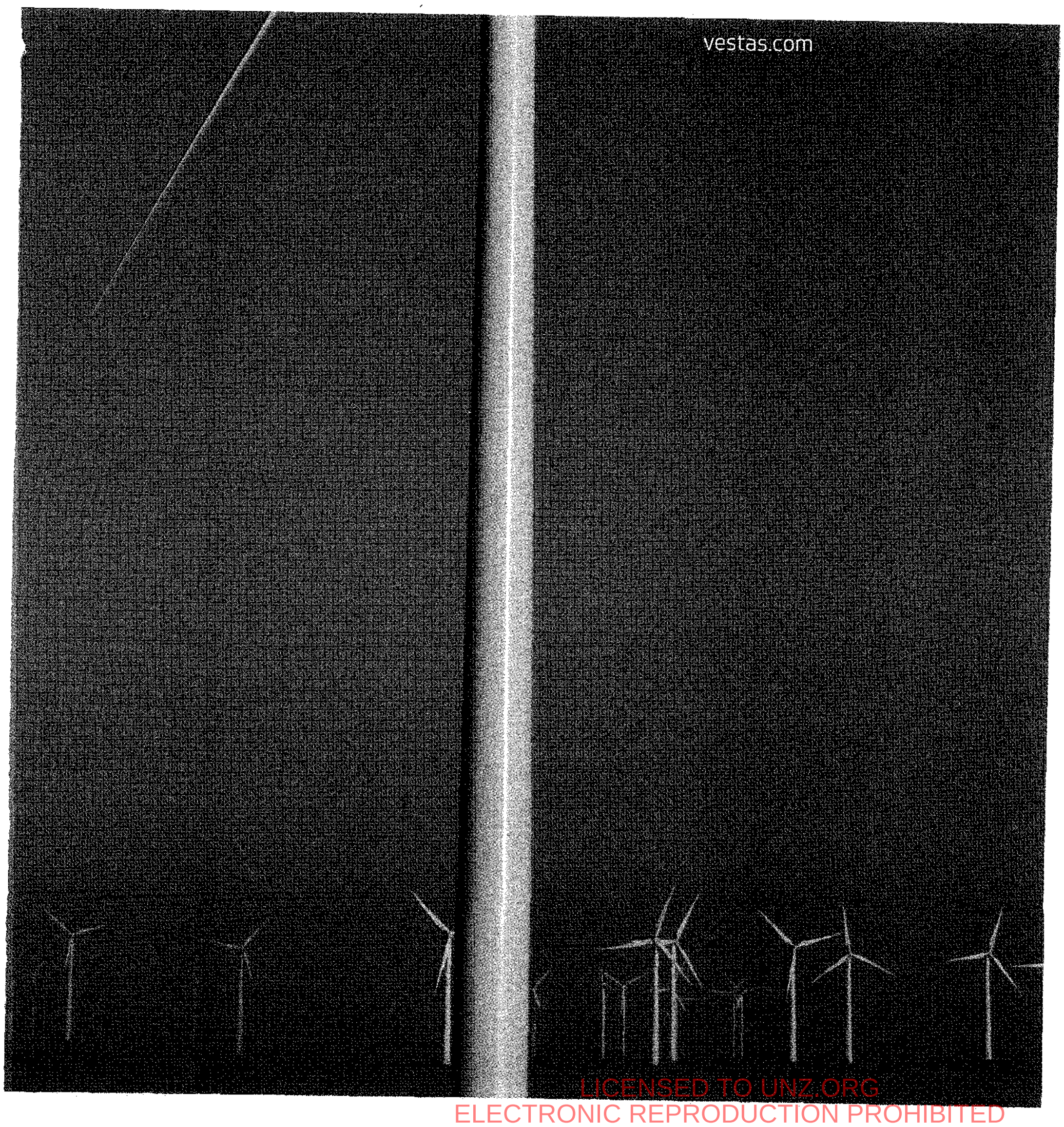

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missed. "She'll rearrange her schedule if she has to," his mother said, and wrote down the date and Siyu's number on a piece of scrap paper.

Hanfeng wondered if Siyu had felt similar pressure from his mother. What would she have said to Siyu—*I would like you to date my son*? Knowing his mother, he wondered if she had simply mentioned that her son needed a wife and that she thought Siyu would be the right person for the role. "Why has she never married?" he asked.

"I imagine for the obvious reason of not having felt the need to get married."

"Does she want to get married now?" Hanfeng said. He had expected his mother to reply that Siyu had not met the right person—and then he could have questioned why his mother thought him a good choice for her.

"She didn't say no to the date last time, no?"

When Hanfeng called Siyu to invite her to dinner, the line was quiet for a moment. He waited for her to find an excuse to turn down the invitation, or, better still, to tell him that she had obliged his mother with their last meeting and the sensible thing to do now was to make their mutual disinterest known to his mother. Instead, Siyu asked him if they could possibly meet once more before the dinner. Anytime after she got off from work would do, she said. He wondered why she needed to see him when all could be settled on the phone, but he agreed to a late-afternoon meeting that day.

There was a power outage at the coffee shop where Siyu had suggested they meet. Apart from the light of a few candles on the counter, the inside of the shop, a long, narrow rectangle, was almost pitch-black. Siyu, who had arrived a few minutes earlier and taken a seat by the only window, explained to Hanfeng that the place was always quiet, and more so today, as the coffeemakers were not hissing. A sulky young girl placed a pot of tea and two cups heavily on the table. Siyu apologized for the shop's unfriendliness after the girl had returned to the counter. "I'm about their only regular customer, but for three years no one has acknowledged me," she said.

"Why do you still come here?"

"It's quiet. I can assure you it's not easy to find a quiet place like this in Beijing," Siyu said. "My theory is that the proprietress is a rich man's mistress. She does not want the shop to make money for him, and he cannot close it, because it was his present to her."

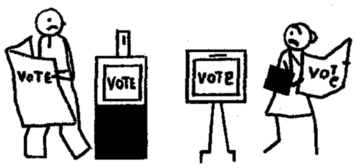
Hanfeng looked around, but there was no one there besides the girl at the counter. "They seem to hire unhappy people," he said.

"The proprietress is a beautiful woman," Siyu said. Hanfeng nodded. He had no further questions, and she could see that he was one of those people who would not return to the place. She wished she could tell him that, apart from the beauty of the woman who once in a while showed up at the coffee shop with an air of authority, there was little evidence to support her guess. Yet there had to be an explanation for the sad, lifeless appearance of the shop. She thought of telling him this, but he was part of the world that did not seek her explanations. The world had made up its mind about her oddity in her spinsterhood.

They sat in silence for a moment. In another place, a more romantic setting, lovers' murmurs would have been well masked by soft jazz coming from hidden speakers, their faces illuminated by candlelight, but here there was no music and the candles were lit out of necessity. The idea of getting to know Hanfeng better before having dinner with him and his mother seemed, like all the other ideas that had occurred to Siyu, a regrettable mistake. When he did not help find a harmless topic of discussion, she asked him if he was aware of his mother's wish to see him get married.

"I suppose all mothers worry about their children's marriage status," Hanfeng said vaguely. He had thought that his mother had long ago accepted who he was; when he had visited from America in the past, she had never pressed for any details of his American life, sparing him the pain of explaining himself. "Doesn't your mother?"

She had no right to feel let down, Siyu thought. Nevertheless, it disappointed her that Professor Dai had not told him much about her. That she had been raised by her father had been, from a young age, the first thing people said of her. "I never met my mother," she said. "My father brought me up by himself."

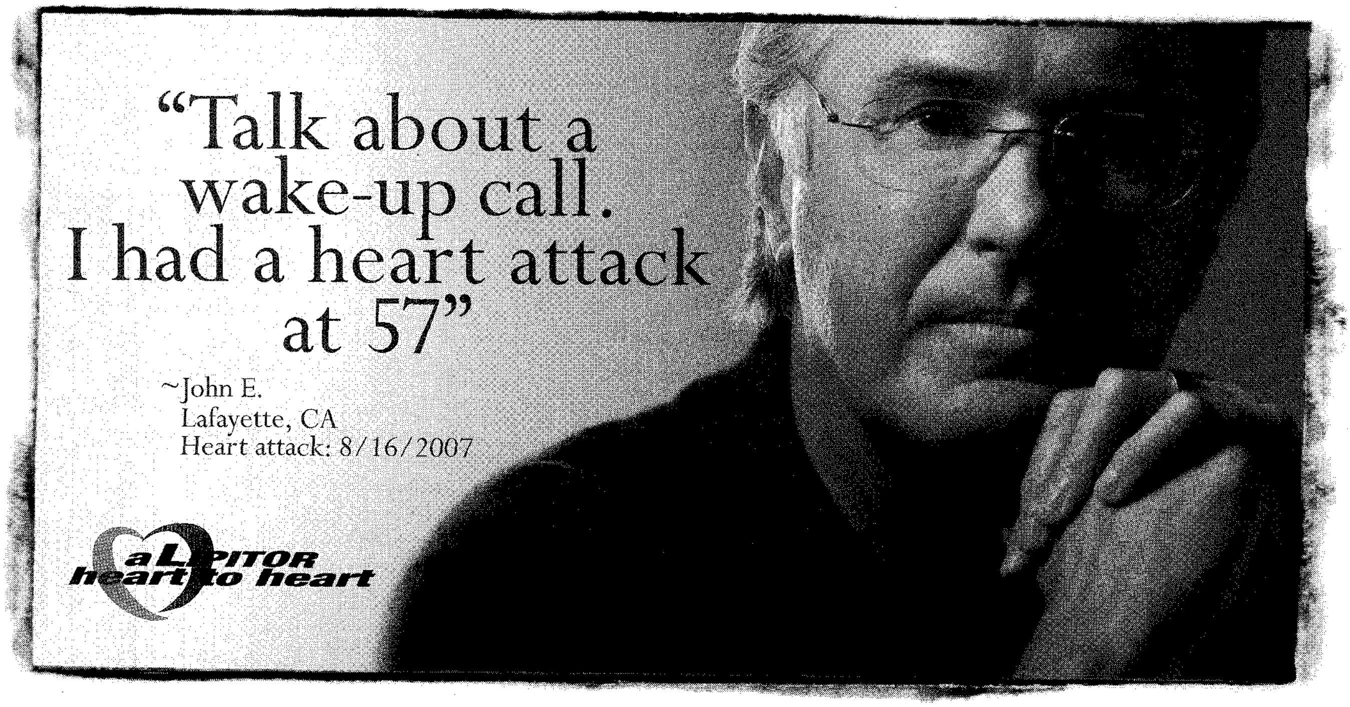


Hanfeng looked up at her. Before he could form an apology, she said there was no need for one. She had grown up not knowing her loss, so there had not been any real loss. She wondered if that was how Hanfeng thought of his father. Professor Dai had never mentioned her late husband, but Siyu had once had a summer job in the department office, and had heard other professors and the secretaries talk about how he had died in a snowstorm when his bicycle skidded in front of a bus. An accident that no one could be blamed for, but Siyu had sensed the others' disapproval of Professor Dai, as if she were partially responsible for the unfair fate befalling a man; the dead husband, by contrast, was always praised as the gentlest person.

"What was it like to grow up with only a father?" Hanfeng asked. He had little recollection of his father, but there were photographs, taken when Hanfeng had turned a hundred days, six months, one year, and then two years old. In all four pictures, he was flanked by his parents, who looked serious and attentive. They would have been called gold boy and emerald girl at their wedding, enviable for their matching good looks. It must have been his father's idea to have a family picture taken at every milestone of his life, since after his father's death Hanfeng had never been in the same photograph as his mother.

She imagined it was not very different from growing up with a mother, Siyu replied. There was no other parent to whom they could compare the one they had, and love did not have to be balanced and divided between two people; the claiming of loyalty was unnecessary. Siyu did not say these things, but there was a gentleness in Hanfeng's eyes where before there had been only aloofness, and she knew that he understood.

Hanfeng turned away from Siyu's gaze and looked out the window. A woman in a heavy mud-colored coat was riding a bicycle and threading through the long line of cars in the street, and a young child, bundled up in



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a gray shawl, so that its gender could not be determined, sat on a bamboo chair affixed to the back rack of the bicycle, as unfazed as the mother was by the impatient honking of drivers around them. Hanfeng pointed out the child to Siyu, knowing that both of them had travelled the streets of Beijing in that way, he behind his mother, she her father.

After the woman and her child had disappeared from sight, Siyu said that, when she started to ride her bicycle to school at twelve, her father would get up every morning and run after her until she reached the school gate. She used to be ashamed of being the only one escorted to school by a running father, but she could never say no to him.

"He must be the most loving father in the world," Hanfeng said.

Siyu nodded. A door behind the counter opened and then closed, and for a moment it seemed that the flickering candles would be extinguished. She had had to squeeze the hand brake often on the downhill ride to the school so that her father's panting would not be so loud that other people took notice, and only when she was much older did she realize that her father had insisted on running beside her so that she would not become one of the wild youngsters who sped and broke an arm or a skull in an accident. She had always been aware of his love for her and for her mother, even though he had not said much, but in the end she had been the one to make up grand reasons for her absence. You're still my only daughter, he had said to her when she decided not to attend his wedding; you're part of the family, he had said when she told him that she would not be coming home for the lunar New Year. He did not need her to complicate his life, she had replied, knowing that he would stoically accept her proposal of a monthly lunch as their only way of remaining father and daughter.

Ungrateful and coldhearted she must seem in the eyes of old neighbors and family friends, but how could she stay in his sight when she was going through her life with a reckless speed known only to herself, all because of a love she could not explain and did not have the right to claim in the first place? I wonder if I made a mistake by bringing you up alone, her father had said to her at their most recent lunch, taking it as his failure that she had not found a husband. I was afraid of what a stepmother would do to a girl, but perhaps a woman would have made a difference, he said, less guarded and more talkative now in his old age. Siyu had shaken her head and denied that he had anything to regret. That she had grown up without a mother could be a ready explanation for anything—her oddness in her teen-age years, her choice of an unremarkable job despite her excellence in schoolwork, her singleness. Were people to know her secret, they might easily conclude that she had spent her life looking for a mother in her love of an older woman, but Siyu did not believe that things would have turned out any differently had she had a mother.

A beautiful and sad woman, Hanfeng thought as he looked at Siyu's face. As beautiful and sad a woman, perhaps, as his mother had once been. Could this account for his mother's wish for a marriage between Siyu and him? Hanfeng had been surprised, at first, that a former student would remain close to his mother. She had not been the kind to pick favorites among her students; nor had she ever encouraged any personal interaction with them, as far as he knew, though he could see why Siyu, motherless and with a gentle and loving father, might seek out a professor despite, or perhaps because of, her sternness. But Siyu seemed to know his mother only in a peripheral way, as a pupil, and Hanfeng wondered if this was why his mother had allowed the younger woman to remain a friend. When Hanfeng was ten, a woman had come from a southern province to see his mother. An unannounced visit, he could tell, when his mother returned home in the evening and found him shelling peas alongside the guest, their knees almost touching, on two low stools. The woman, who had told Hanfeng that she was a very old friend of his mother's and was planning to stay with them for a week, had left the next morning before he awoke. He had been puzzled but had intuitively known not to ask his mother about it. Still, the image of the woman's face, pale at the sight of his mother, and her hands, which let the peas fall into the pile of shells, had stayed with Hanfeng. He could not pinpoint when he understood that there had been betrayals between the two friends, but by the time he left home for college he had known that he

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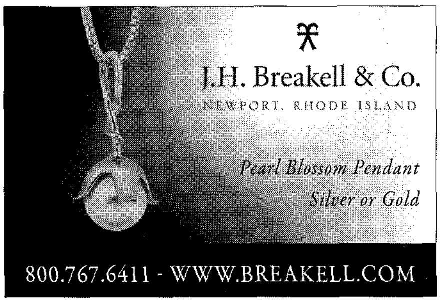
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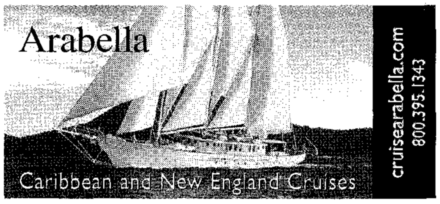
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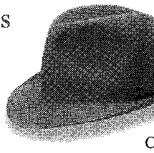
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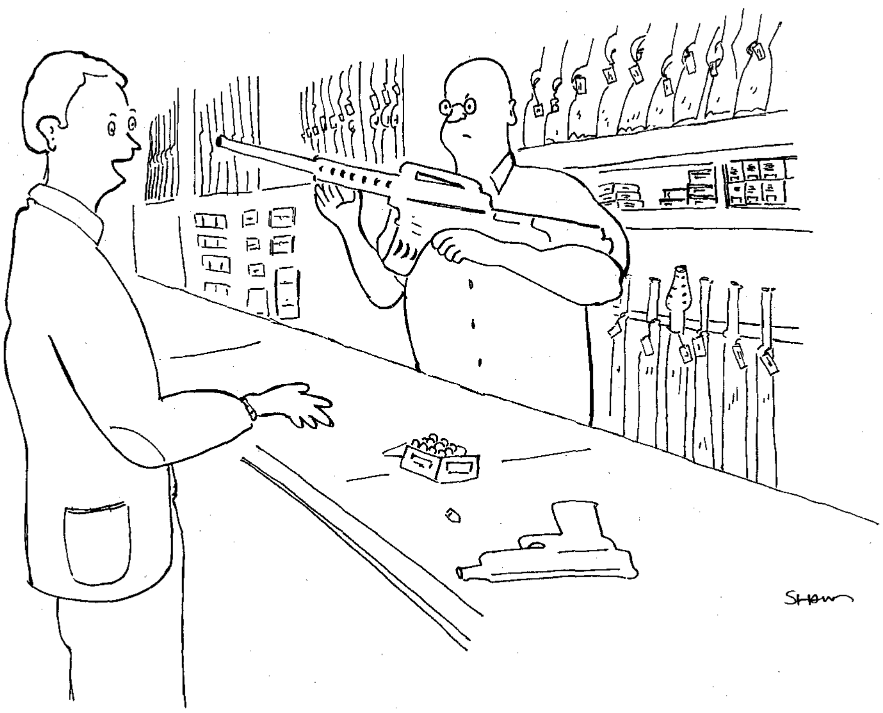


"What would Antonin Scalia pack?"

would never learn the true story, his mother having long ago decided to live alone with the secret until her death.

At the dinner, both Siyu and Hanfeng felt a shyness around each other, but Professor Dai did not let the awkwardness deter her. "When you are young, you marry for passion," she said, looking first at her son and then at her future daughter-in-law. "When you're older, you marry for companionship."

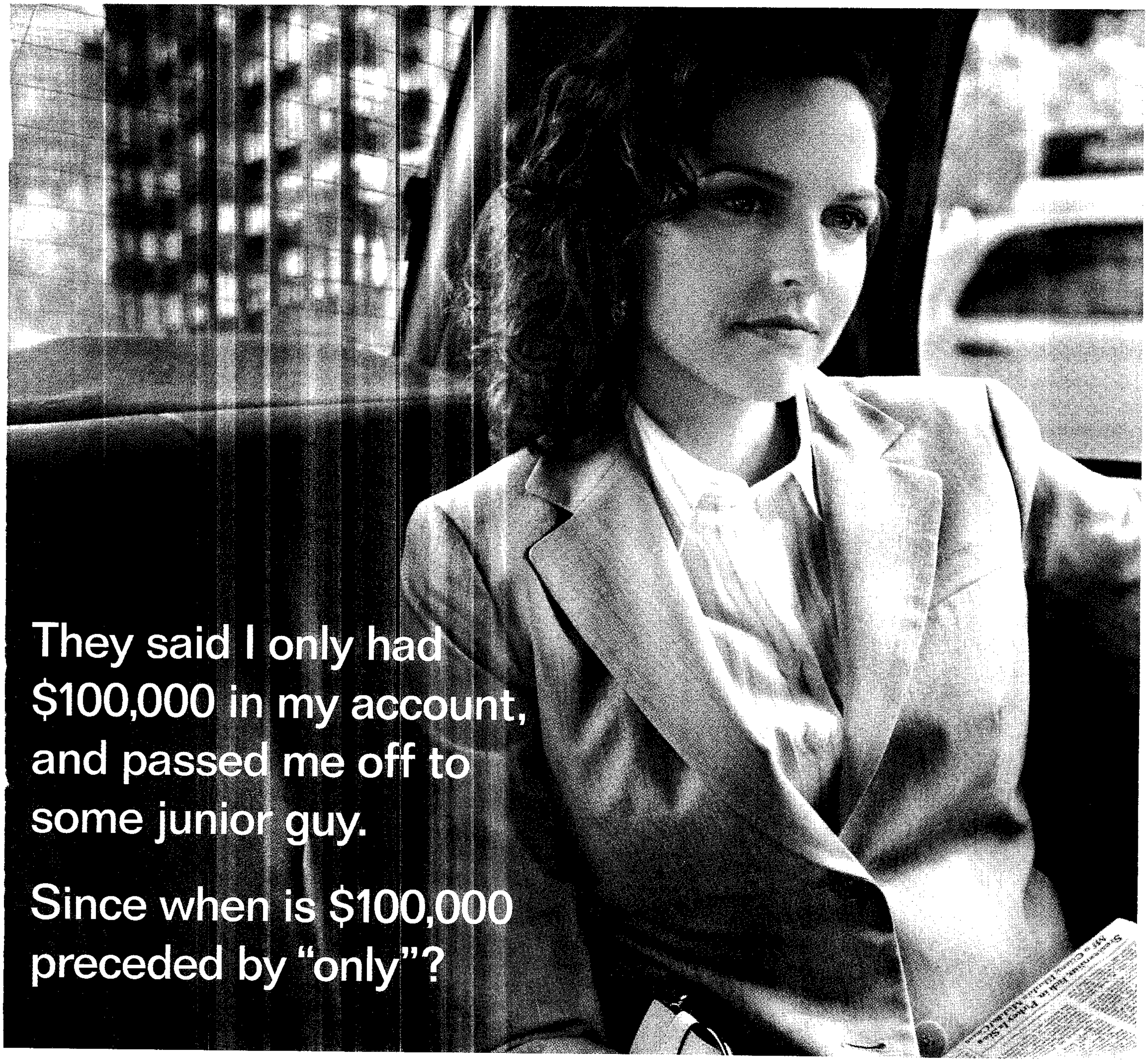
Hanfeng glanced down at his plate. One day she would die, his mother had said to him the night before, after he had listened to her stumble through a Chopin piece on the piano. There was nothing to grieve about in her death, but she would like to see that he did not repeat her fate. Repeat? Hanfeng had asked, pretending that he did not understand and knowing that she could see through him. She would like him to marry Siyu, his mother had said. There were many ways to maintain a marriage, and she expected theirs to be far from the worst.

The same message had been conveyed to Siyu, when Hanfeng was sent to buy a bottle of wine for dinner. She was helping Professor Dai lay the table, and, when she looked over, the older woman paired the chopsticks without meeting her eyes. Siyu had never mentioned the strangers she had been matched up with over the years, but, one New Year's Eve, Professor Dai had told Siyu that she shouldn't get married if it was not what she wanted. They had just finished dinner, and, sitting across the table from Professor Dai, Siyu could see the prints of bamboo leaves on the curtain lit up by the fireworks outside. Professor Dai had opened a bottle of wine that year, an unusual addition to the holiday meal, as neither of them was the type to celebrate. You could feel trapped by the wrong man, Professor Dai said. Her voice, softened by the wine, was less steely and almost inaudible beneath the booming of the fireworks; you would have to wish for his death every day of your marriage, but, once the wish was granted by a miracle, you would never be free of your own cruelty. Siyu listened, knowing that the older woman was talking about herself, knowing also that both of them would pretend to have forgotten the conversation after that night. Other conversations, on other New Year's Eves, were never mentioned again. One year, Siyu had told Professor Dai about her mother's suicide; another year, Professor Dai had mentioned that her son had no interest in marriage. Professor Dai's acknowledgment of Siyu's decision to purchase a secondhand car so that the older woman could avoid taking a crowded bus or enduring a chatty cabdriver was hinted at but not directly stated, and so was her gratitude for Siyu's alertness, when she had failed to answer Siyu's weekly phone call and Siyu had discovered the older woman on the floor by the piano, having suffered a stroke.

She had remained unmarried for Professor Dai, Siyu thought now, and she would, with her blessing, become a married woman. She would not wish for her husband's death, as his mother had, because the marriage, arranged as it was, would still be a love marriage. Siyu had wished to be a companion for Professor Dai in her old age, and her wish would now be granted, an unexpected gift from a stingy life.

"So this is an engagement dinner, then?" Hanfeng said, feeling that it was his duty to say something to avoid silence among the three of them. He doubted that he would feel any deficiency in his life without a wife, he had said the night before, and his mother had replied that Siyu was not the kind of woman who would take much away from him.

"We don't need any formality among us," Professor Dai said now, and told Siyu that she should move in at her earliest convenience instead of wasting money on rent. Siyu looked down the hallway, knowing that the room that served as a piano studio for Professor Dai would be converted into the third bedroom, the piano relocated to the living room. She could see herself standing by the window and listening to Hanfeng and Professor Dai play four-hand, and she could see the day when she would replace Professor Dai on the piano bench, her husband patient with her inexperienced fingers. They were half orphans, and beyond that there was the love for his mother that they could share with no one else, he as a son who had once left but had now returned, she who had not left and would never leave. They were lonely and sad people, all three of them, and they would not make one another less sad, but they could, with great care, make a world that would accommodate their loneliness. ♦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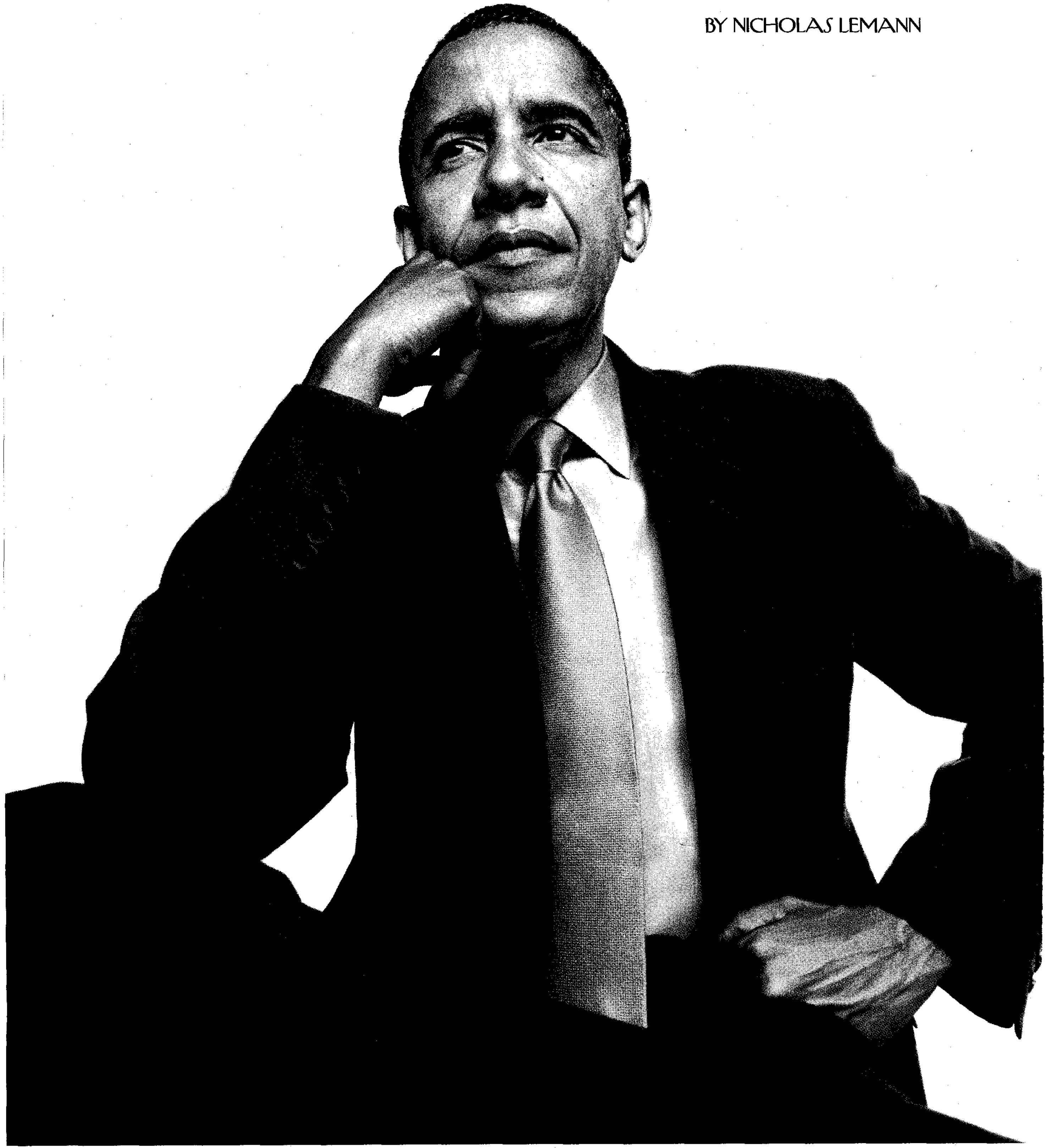
THE POLITICAL SCENE

WORLDS APART

Obama, McCain, and the future of foreign policy.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN



For Obama, the question is whether he can successfully keep the focus on new ideas, and avoid the old routine of Democratic defensiveness

ᶠor McCain, the question is whether he can come across as understanding the ways in which the world has changed. Photographs by Platon.

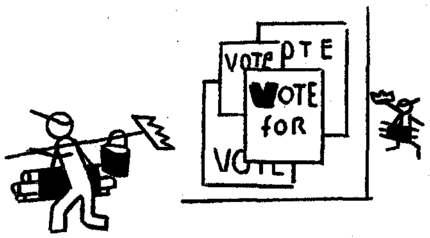
When John Kerry came to the stage at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, he saluted smartly and said he was reporting for duty. Kerry was a decorated Vietnam veteran and a senator with many years of foreign-policy experience. The Bush Administration's central foreign-policy initiative, the war in Iraq, was going badly, and Kerry was supposed to be able to confront President Bush on the issue and win. But in the bleary aftermath, to people in the very small world of Democratic Party foreign-policy professionals, it seemed that Bush had somehow framed the election around foreign policy and managed to win, despite a weak hand. He did this mainly by presenting himself as more resolute, more fully alive to threats to the United States, and prepared to deal with them more harshly than Kerry—which was a variant on how Republicans had presented themselves for years.

While Bush was preparing for his second term, foreign-policy Democrats began preparing for the 2008 Presidential election. How could they prevent another version of 2004, with toughness as the fail-safe Republican argument? One way might be for the Democrats to scrub any remaining hint of docility from their reputation (though Kerry had tried to do that, and failed). Another would be to change the nature of the conversation. Barack Obama, even before announcing his candidacy, was deeply engaged in the latter approach.

Last summer, a small group of prominent foreign-policy Democrats who call themselves the Phoenix Initiative, and who first came together in early 2005—the link between their name and Kerry's defeat should be obvious—published a report. It had the kind of aggressively bland title that is typical of such efforts ("Strategic Leadership: Framework for a Twenty-first Century National Security Strategy") and got almost no attention. Reports like this rarely do, except in retrospect, such as a 2000 report by the neoconservative Project for a New American Century, which laid some of the groundwork for the Bush Administration's foreign policy. The Phoenix Initiative's report was published with a brief preface by Susan E. Rice, who is one of Obama's top foreign-policy advisers and is almost certain to serve in a high government position if he wins the Presidency. Rice, a brisk, direct woman in her early forties, had worked in the Clinton Administration, first on the National Security Council and then as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and had been part of John Kerry's foreign-policy team in the 2004 campaign. The report lays out a new approach to American foreign policy, and in so doing it implicitly promises that the Democrats might be able, finally, to set the terms on national security.

"This report," Rice writes in her preface, "breaks away from such traditional concepts as *containment*, *engagement*, and *enlargement* and rejects standard dichotomies of realist power politics versus liberal idealism." It "offers bold and genuinely new thinking about America's role." The report lists five top "strategic priorities" for the United States. The first three are issues that governments, or even international organizations, can't handle on their own: counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, and, taken together, climate change and oil dependence. The other two are regional: the Middle East and East Asia. The report barely mentions great-power diplomacy, the traditional core concept of statecraft. It is not just post-Cold War but post-war on terror and, arguably, post-American hegemony. (It makes a point of describing the war in Iraq as a bad idea, rather than as a good idea poorly executed.) It speaks of "interconnectedness" and "diffuse power." It isn't dovish or sanguine, exactly—those top three strategic priorities are all threats—but it definitely does not envision American military power, or even power combined with diplomacy, as the only effective tool of foreign-policymaking.

Well before the Phoenix Initiative's report came out, Obama was using similar themes in his speeches. In his first major foreign-policy address, delivered in Chicago in April, 2007, he said, "When narco-trafficking and corruption threaten democracy in Latin America, it's America's problem, too. When poor villagers in Indonesia have no choice but to send chickens to market infected with avian flu, it cannot be seen as a distant concern. When religious schools in Pakistan teach hatred to young children, our children are threatened as well. Whether it's global terrorism or pandemic disease, dramatic climate change or the proliferation of weapons of mass annihilation, the threats we face at the dawn of the twenty-first century can no longer be contained by borders and boundaries."



John McCain talks about new kinds of threat sometimes, too, but his views on foreign policy are completely different from Obama's, in tone and in substance. McCain's chief focus is on great powers, and on the all-importance of maintaining American military and political primacy in the world. There is a lot at stake in foreign policy in this campaign. The next President will have two wars to pursue, one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. McCain has said he believes both countries "can in time become pillars of stability, tolerance, and democracy," as long as America commits military and economic resources to them. Obama wants to draw down U.S. forces in Iraq and focus on Afghanistan, and he tends to define the war there more in terms of the threat of terrorism than of the opportunity to establish a model democracy. "On Iraq, McCain is wedded to unrealistic goals," Susan Rice told me. Whoever wins the election may have a chance to do something larger: propose a new defining idea for American foreign policy. For McCain, a history buff who loves to talk about America's glorious military and diplomatic triumphs, the question has been whether he would be viewed as someone who understands how the world has changed. For Obama, the question is whether he can successfully keep the focus on his new ideas, which means avoiding the old routine of Democratic defensiveness on foreign policy.

The 2008 Democratic campaigns were staffing up in foreign policy in 2006, when Hillary Clinton looked like a sure bet to be the Party's nominee. Just about every foreign-policy Democrat had worked in Bill Clinton's Administration, and those who had been most prominent—such as Madeleine Albright, the former Secretary of State, and

Richard Holbrooke, the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and negotiator of the Dayton peace accords—signed on with Mrs. Clinton's campaign. A few people pulled off the tricky feat of not endorsing anybody (something that campaigns don't find endearing, and that the 2008 Clinton campaign, in particular, didn't) and, instead, as the saying goes, "offering advice to anyone who might find it helpful." Dennis Ross, the former Middle East peace negotiator, is one of those, and another is James Steinberg, the former deputy national-security adviser, now at a safe distance from Washington as dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. (Both would be likely to serve in an Obama Administration.) For the most part, though, the other Democratic campaigns represented an opportunity for less obvious foreign-policy names to place their career bets in a way that might produce a dramatic return in 2009.

So, although it is accurate to say that Barack Obama's foreign-policy team is led by people who served in the Clinton Administration, this formulation leaves out what is most important about them: They broke with Bill and Hillary Clinton in a way that they knew the Clinton camp would remember. They saw Obama as the bolder, more visionary candidate, the one who understood how profoundly the world had changed and how completely American foreign policy had to change, too.

The Obama campaign started with a big idea about foreign policy: that the great issues of the future, like climate change, terrorism, and pandemic disease, cannot be solved through traditional means of nation-to-nation military and diplomatic dealings. The McCain campaign also started with a big idea, one rooted in the candidate's life experience and the conviction of McCain and the people around him that the Bush Administration has handled national security badly. The idea is that the United States should assert itself more aggressively and adroitly as the world's superpower and forge a new alliance of the most powerful democracies that pointedly excludes Russia and China. Presidential campaigns run for so long that, even when they present a choice as stark as this one, they function as a running real-time test of the power of the candidates' ideas. It matters most who wins, but it also matters a lot who winds up leading the conversation—how the candidates adapt to each other and to changing circumstances before Election Day. In that sense, even before the votes are cast and counted, a lot has already happened in American foreign policy this year.

"I'm afraid we've had to move him to expensive care."

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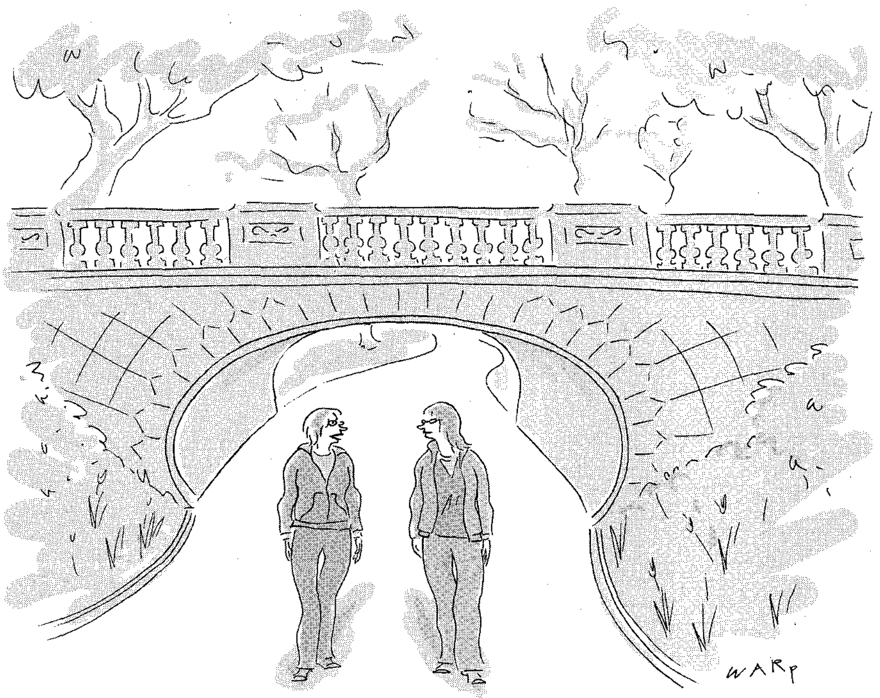
In 2004, as Barack Obama, a third-term Illinois state senator who had lost a congressional race a couple of years earlier, was preparing for what looked like a quixotic run for the Senate, he began to acquaint himself with the foreign-policy world in Washington. His first important contact was Anthony Lake, whom he'd met over the phone in 2002. Lake had made a speech in Chicago; afterward, someone who had been in the audience told him that he really ought to meet Obama. Lake, who teaches at Georgetown and has been working in Democratic Presidential campaigns since 1971, is the oldest of the top Obama advisers. (Lake and Holbrooke, who was the most important of Hillary Clinton's campaign advisers, were both members of the Foreign Service class of 1962.) He wears sweaters and wire-rimmed glasses; he looks like a boarding-school headmaster who secretly sympathizes with the more rebellious students. His charm lies in his ability to convey the sense that he can summon up a degree of detachment, and even occasional amusement, beyond what you'd expect from a foreign-policy player—that he cares about the great game but doesn't need it. Lake was Bill Clinton's first national-security adviser, and his time with Clinton ended unhappily when he was nominated to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency and, under fire from conservatives, had to withdraw.

Lake began talking to Obama, and hosted a dinner party in Washington to introduce him to some foreign-policy experts. Obama was already far more than a typical freshman senator, because of the spectacular keynote speech he had given at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, and when he began to think seriously about running for President his relationship with Lake deepened. About a year and a half into his Senate term, Obama had formed a core group of foreign-policy advisers, which included Susan Rice, whom Lake had introduced him to; Samantha Power, the writer whose book about genocide, "A Problem from Hell," Obama had read and admired; and Mark Lippert, a rising young Capitol Hill staff member who had become the foreign-policy expert on Obama's Senate staff. The group later expanded to include Gregory Craig, whose ties to the Clintons went back to Yale Law School, and who had worked in the Administration and helped to manage Bill Clinton's defense during the impeachment proceedings. Craig, who had met Obama at a number of Washington events put on by well-connected people (the host of the first one was Vernon Jordan), helped to produce a memo in 2006 detailing how Obama might go about running in the 2008 New Hampshire Presidential primary. Over the 2006 holiday season, Obama made up his mind to run for President, and in early 2007 he asked Lake and Rice to set up a network of outside experts on foreign policy for him.

Nobody in the group around Obama was a genuine Washington outsider, but its members were seen as representing the liberal wing of the Democratic foreign-policy establishment. However, just as Obama likes to think of himself as transcending traditional racial and ideological divisions, his foreign-policy advisers objected to being labelled as traditional doves. Even Lake, who was the *locus classicus* of a dove during the later stages of the Vietnam War, presents himself today as someone who understands new kinds of threats and new kinds of international relationships, and is not reluctant to use force or assert American interests. His most recent book, published in 2000, is called "Six Nightmares: The Real Threats to American Security." Obama's advisers never forgot that a perceived lack of toughness on national security had brought down Democratic Presidential candidates in the past.

Still, Hillary Clinton's foreign-policy team—which included familiar names from her husband's Administration, such as Warren Christopher, another former Secretary of State, and William J. Perry, a former Secretary of Defense—regarded Obama as being a bit too soft.



"I'm voting Republican just so Tina Fey will keep impersonating Sarah Palin."

In the primaries, Obama's strongest argument was that he had opposed the Iraq war and that his two leading opponents, Clinton and John Edwards, had voted in favor of the Bush Administration's resolution authorizing it. Obama proposed a timetable for withdrawal, and Clinton would not. During the CNN/YouTube debate, in South Carolina in the summer of 2007, Obama responded to a question by saying unhesitatingly that he would be willing to meet without preconditions with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea during his first year in office; Clinton said that she would not promise to do that, and one of her recurring criticisms of Obama was that while she could be trusted to respond to foreign-policy crises, he could not. Her best-known campaign advertisement, about the White House "crisis phone" ringing at three in the morning, was meant to convey that message.

Obama's advisers, for their part, thought of Clinton and her advisers as being mired in the past, and as having too many egos, too many power struggles, and too many unresolved psychological issues. In addition to everything else they are post-, the Obama team gives the feeling of being post-therapy: they know who they are, they're not needy, they have it under control. In explaining why they signed on with Obama, most of his top foreign-policy advisers took pains to say that they found him calm, grounded, respectful, and ready to listen—implying that certain other past and potential Presidents lack those qualities. "There is a degree of self-reflection, self-awareness, and psychological wholeness he arrived at after going through a period of working through his identity as the son of a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas," Richard Danzig, a Secretary of the Navy during the Clinton Administration, who was the last member of the Obama foreign-policy high command to join up, in the spring of 2007, said. "Having worked for two Presidents and with many Presidential candidates during the last thirty years, I have not seen one as psychologically well balanced, and as good about not injecting his ego into a problem."

The network of experts set up by Lake and Rice eventually grew to about three hundred, divided into teams by re-

ELECTRA WOMAN

You come home to find Electra Woman
and Dyna Girl in bed. You know they've been up
to something. Freddie the Flute's all sticky.
It is, you might say, disconcerting. At least
one of them isn't a witch, black skirts all akimbo,
super-powered broom still throbbing. You should
ask if it's a dream, some strange return of the "Krofft
Power Hour," but, knowing reruns are unlikely, you join
in anyway. Later, during a commercial break,
you'll decide you've flipped your lid, gone a bit bugaloo.
At one point they'll have you dress like Jimmy, tease
you, call you Dr. Shrinker. After the dust clears,
after all the talking trees, talking books, dinosaurs
and dancing sleestak, after a bit more cling
and clang, once the crystals align and the portal closes
again, once you stop speaking in tongues (fluent
Pakuni), you will recall how, each Saturday,
you used to wait for, want, them all. Breathless, live
cartoons, live girls, ones you didn't have to draw.
You will feel like you've been puffing stuff.

—Bryan D. Dietrich

gion and issue, with each group generating its own material and passing it up the line. (Now, after the official absorption of Hillary Clinton's foreign-policy apparatus, there may be as many as five hundred experts connected to the Obama campaign.) These people support a close group of about a half-dozen advisers, who include, in addition to Rice, Lake, Craig, Danzig, and Lippert, another former Senate staffer named Denis McDonough, who worked for Tom Daschle before he was unseated in 2004; Ben Rhodes, a young speechwriter who had helped draft the Iraq Study Group Report in 2006; and Scott Gration, a retired Air Force major-general whom Obama has befriended. Only Lippert, Rhodes, and McDonough are on the campaign's payroll; Lippert travels with Obama, Rhodes is based at campaign headquarters in Chicago, and McDonough splits his time between Chicago and Washington. The thoughts of the many experts—who generally respond by e-mail—are most often filtered through Rice, Lippert, and McDonough. Thus far, nobody leaks, nobody bickers in a way that can be discerned by outsiders, and there are not obvious camps. The general feel of the campaign, both in its spread-out virtual form and at its headquarters in a modern office tower in downtown Chicago, is a little like that of the Microsoft campus in the nineteen-nineties, or the Google campus today: everybody seems young, trim, competent, cool, and casual, but casual in a "you and I both know that we're ferocious and brilliant and we're going to crush the other team" way.

The tone comes from Obama himself—he's a mixture of soulful outsider and competitive, hyper-organized meritocrat—and it has an ideological manifestation. The Obama people think of themselves as future-oriented strategic thinkers, not old-fashioned, gooey, Eleanor Roosevelt-style humanitarians—as people who get it, the "it" being the new realities of the twenty-first century. Although the candidates may be required to say that their foremost concern is how the economic crisis affects the middle class, they seem to get their inexhaustible drive from the belief that they might be able to run American foreign policy. Obama's foreign-policy staff likes to think he reads their memos first. The most sustained signal we have about Obama's personal views on foreign policy is the next-to-last chapter of his 2006 book "The Audacity of Hope," which is called "The World Beyond Our Borders," and which, by all accounts, he wrote himself, taking particular care with it.

Politicians who write well usually come alive on the page when discussing policy—think of the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Obama comes alive when creating scenes and characters (including himself). He's a master of autobiography, as is McCain, if you consider him and his amanuensis, Mark Salter, as a single writing unit. But the analytic passages in "The Audacity of Hope" are cautious and shot through with a concern to appear balanced and to avoid saying anything that might peg the author as a typical liberal. Obama begins with a long, vivid set piece about the time he spent in Indonesia as a child, which suggests that he comes to the subject of foreign policy with a sense of how America looks to non-Americans. (McCain, when living abroad, was always an American military officer, even as a prisoner of war; Obama was briefly the stepson of an Indonesian military officer.)

The policy part of the chapter demonstrates a politician's need to hedge: Obama says that he struggled with his decision to oppose the Iraq war, and he offers measured praise to President Reagan. But it does put forth fresh ideas. Obama wants to "build a new international consensus around the challenges of transnational threats." Of great-power competition as the defining element in statecraft, he writes, "That world no longer exists." Instead of Russia and China, we should be focussed mainly on "terrorist networks intent on repelling or disrupting the forces of globalization, potential pandemic disease like avian flu, or catastrophic changes in the earth's climate," and the way to make headway there is by bringing together multinational coalitions and adding new elements to the traditional foreign-policy tool kit. As Lake put it, when I spoke to him, traditional statesmen see international relations as a game of chess, and "post-realists" see it as more like the complicated multidirectional Japanese board game of Go—"but Obama knows you have to play both boards at the same time." (In the Obama camp, all dichotomies are false dichotomies, which the candidate transcends.)

The most mystical believer in Obamaism whom I met was Scott Gration, the retired Air Force major-general—a burly, friendly, artifice-less guy who assured me that he had only recently begun to wear a tie regularly. I went to see him over the summer at his house in Nutley, New Jersey. An American flag flies from a flagpole on the lawn. Gration, who grew up in Africa as the son of American missionaries, and who flew two hundred and seventy-four combat missions over Iraq, used to be a registered Republican, but he became a Democrat after spending time with Obama, especially during a trip to Africa in 2006. Perhaps because his background isn't conventionally liberal, he is more open than the other top Obama advisers in expressing a soaring optimism about the possibility of a less arrogant, more coöperative, more empathetic America leading the world in confronting its most intractable problems. "We've screwed up," he told me. "We don't really fix these things." He mentioned the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the Israel-Palestine dispute, and the tension between Russia and Georgia. "What I'd hope we learn from that is: 'Yep, we've got to fix the basic issues here.'" He went on, "What doesn't work, in Gration's mind, is forcing a solution. Create an environment, give people the opportunity to air their differences, and see if they can come together. We don't tell them what the solution is, but we do have an obligation—let's get people in here, find out the needs, see if you can come up with a plan. Don't try to freeze conflicts!"

Gration was impatient with the idea that conflict is the natural state of the world, to be managed rather than resolved. "People are more alike than their cultures and religions," he said. "When Obama talks about global citizens, it's the same framework. You see, religion and culture—they're the way people communicate their values. They want stability, order, education. This is just humanness. Then you add on your religion, your culture—that's how you execute it." His implication was that if we can get past the religious and cultural identities that serve as host organisms for conflict, and deal with people at the level of their humanity and their basic needs, then we can make real progress—especially if Obama personally holds an office that permits him to set the tone and lead the effort.

The idea had an early field test on Obama's 2006 trip to Africa, and a more serious test last summer, when he and an entourage that included most of his principal foreign-policy aides toured the Middle East and Europe. A mere state legislator four years earlier, Obama had already, it appeared, become an important world leader. He met with heads of state—he was confident, they were respectful and attentive—and capped off the trip with a speech to an ecstatic crowd of two hundred thousand in Berlin. It seemed to prove not only that Obama was ready for the Presidency, and that his ideas represented a fresh and attractive approach to foreign affairs, but also that Obama alone could put those ideas into action. And then the fall campaign began and Obama was inevitably confronted with some long-standing realities—the sort of international issue that became obvious two weeks after the speech in Berlin, when Russia invaded Georgia.

I interviewed John McCain a few weeks ago in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he was conducting his first joint town-hall meeting with his running mate, Sarah Palin. A Presidential candidate spends a lot of time in bleak backstage settings: hotel suites, service entrances, greenrooms. Our interview took place in an empty two-room suite on the top floor of a Marriott hotel, at the end of a dark, narrow hallway guarded by three or four Secret Service men. McCain walked in with his campaign press secretary, Brooke Buchanan, and his chief foreign-policy adviser, Randy Scheunemann. McCain does not have an obvious, room-filling charisma. He looked thinner than he does in photographs, and seemed alert but not energetic. He was dressed in a blue blazer, gray slacks, loafers, and no tie. His face had a kind of parchment translucence, and his left eye was slightly shut. He was clutching a Sharpie pen in his left hand. As he spoke, he would rouse himself from an even calm to animation and then sink back down again.

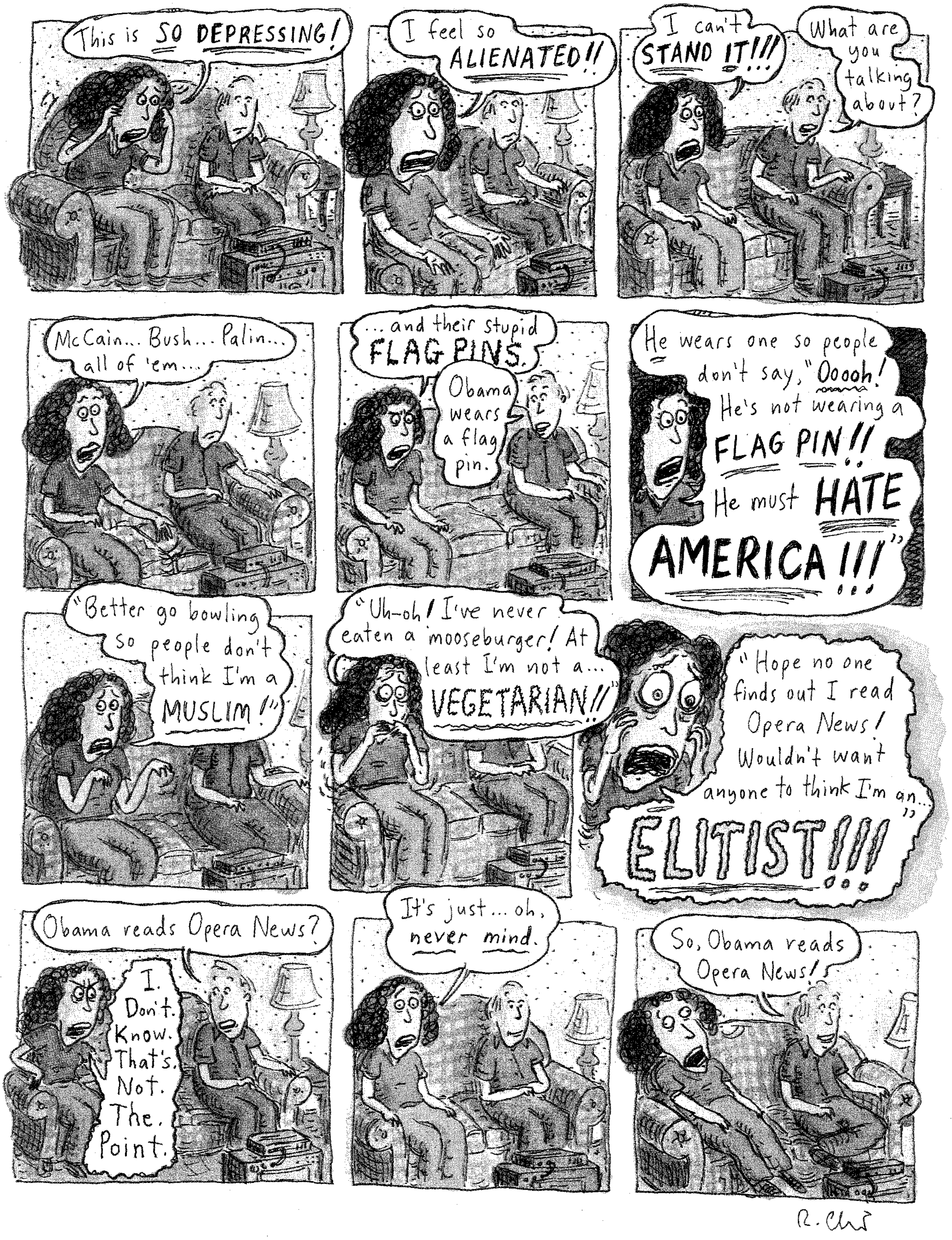
Even if McCain and Obama agreed about everything, you'd have the feeling that the election's outcome mattered a lot, if only because the moods of the two campaign organizations are so different. McCain's campaign does not have three hundred foreign-policy experts divided into teams (and they're proud of it—"John McCain needs foreign-policy advisers like Tiger Woods needs a golf coach!" a member of McCain's staff told me). The McCain national headquarters is in Crystal City, a collection of glass towers in Arlington, Virginia, which, in a thirty-second political ad, one could describe as the sleek home to military contractors—although that would be misleading. There's a downscale subterranean mall and lots of guys wandering around in camo. The McCains' ten homes and thirteen cars notwithstanding, everything to do with the McCain campaign has the frowsy feeling of a town next to a military base. Until surprisingly late in the summer, the headquarters had no security checkpoint for visitors, and if you wandered in you would find a big flat-screen television perpetually tuned to Fox News, a drink dispenser offering Red Bull on tap, a table loaded with unhealthy snacks, and photographs of the candidate in uniform on the walls. There were big, excessively obvious signs in the rooms that said things like "War Room" and "Bundlers"; they looked like props in a school play about a campaign.

The people around McCain put me in mind of one of those old war movies where a salty, can-do major struts into the mess hall and points: "You—soldier! I like the cut of your jib. How about coming along on a special operation? Not for the faint of heart." And then he knows how to cadge some light artillery, a couple of jeeps, and some rations from the quartermaster (he'll do the paperwork later). In the McCain campaign, the women (and not just Sarah Palin) tend to be a little saucy and the men look uncomfortable in suits, and it would be difficult to produce an organization chart that would explain the relationship of McCain's travelling buddies from the Senate, Lindsey Graham and Joseph Lieberman, to the staff and the short roster of outside advisers.

During the first few months after McCain had clinched the Republican nomination, Democrats talked about the McCain campaign as a struggle in foreign policy between "realists" and "neocons," and by fall the consensus was that the neocons had won. But this division is too neat to capture McCain on foreign policy. When I asked him about the over-all situation in the world, he immediately mentioned dangers—"the radical extrem-

SKETCHBOOK BY ROZ CHAST

MIXED MARRIAGE "TAKES TWO TO TANGO"


This is SO DEPRESSING!
I feel so ALIENATED!!
I can't STAND IT!!!
What are you talking about?
McCain... Bush... Palin... all of 'em...
...and their stupid FLAG PINS.
Obama wears a flag pin.
He wears one so people don't say, "Ooooh! He's not wearing a FLAG PIN!! He must HATE AMERICA!!!"
"Better go bowling so people don't think I'm a MUSLIM!"
"Uh-oh! I've never eaten a mooseburger! At least I'm not a... VEGETARIAN!!"
"Hope no one finds out I read Opera News! Wouldn't want anyone to think I'm an... ELITIST!!!"
Obama reads Opera News?
I. Don't. Know. That's. Not. The. Point.
It's just... oh, never mind.
So, Obama reads Opera News!
R. Chast

ist threat," Iran's nuclear-weapons program, Russia's aggressiveness, the rise of China. That's a neocon answer, if it has to be categorized. But McCain thinks of himself as an old foreign-policy hand, a veteran of myriad trips abroad and conversations with foreign leaders, someone who deeply understands the ancient and honorable art of statecraft. He is close to Henry Kissinger. That would make him more of a realist.

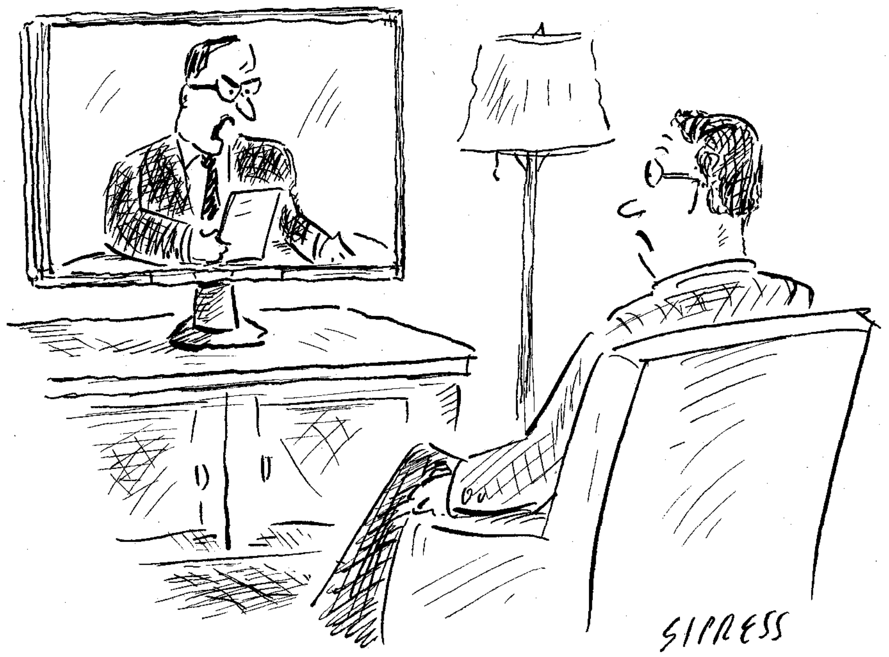
I asked him how he reacted to Obama's promise to meet with the leaders of Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba. "I've never objected—I've encouraged—conversations at various levels," he said. "But look, to say, 'Everything's on the table, without preconditions'—facts are stubborn things. Iran is dedicated to the destruction of the state of Israel and it is pursuing old ambitions in the Middle East. You give Ahmadinejad or Raúl Castro or Chávez a forum for their prestige. Reagan sat down with Gorbachev, but that was after he had refused to sit down with Brezhnev, Andropov, or Chernenko. Nixon did not go to China until he knew what he was going for. *That's* the way you conduct negotiations with these countries."

On the other hand, McCain is a moralist who sees Russia, in particular, as a bad actor. Realists believe that countries should negotiate with each other coolly in terms of national interests, but McCain is not inclined to do that with Russia, or possibly with China, either. He has repeatedly called for the expulsion of Russia from the Group of Eight, the association of major industrial democracies to which it was admitted in 1998. In the nineteen-nineties, he supported the admission of former Soviet satellite states to NATO, and now he would like NATO to admit Georgia and Ukraine. This stance infuriates the Russians. McCain was one of the few Republicans who supported NATO's 1999 campaign against Serbia, one of Russia's allies. Now he wants to set up an organization called the League of Democracies (the echo of Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations is intentional), which would include Brazil, Japan, and India and exclude Russia and China, and which might diminish the importance of the United Nations Security Council and the Group of Eight; he has promised to convene a summit meeting about it during his first year as President. When I asked about this, he said, "I would work toward a League of Democracies that shares our values, and I do not predict that this would lead to a reinstitution of the Cold War. These are K.G.B. apparatchiks. That's what they are. They are bent on reassembling the Russian empire. The government of Ukraine just collapsed. There are seventy thousand Russian passports in South Ossetia. Why? I think we all know the answer. I would be happy to work with the Russians, but we ought to understand the nature of its government—its autocratic nature."

McCain is far more oriented to countries than to transnational forces, and far more apt to stress that America must remain the world's most powerful nation than to lay out a coöperative, collaborative plan for the world's future. "I am committed to working with other nations that share our values," McCain said, "but somebody has to lead. Somebody must lead. America has to lead. Look at the challenges we have faced after September 11th. America led, in coördination with our allies in one case—Afghanistan—and in one case without: Iraq. Somalia was a failure because we did not lead. We have to lead." McCain was in his animated mode now. His eyes were open wide, his face upturned, his arms raised. "I believe in American exceptionalism. I do. And I can prove it by reviewing our history. I want the twenty-first century to be the *American* century."

A few weeks earlier, I had visited McCain's headquarters to talk to Randy Scheunemann. A bearded, affable, informal, sure-of-himself man in his late forties, Scheunemann has spent most of his career working as a foreign-policy staff aide to Senate Republicans (including Bob Dole and Trent Lott), and he once served as the paid Washington lobbyist for the former Soviet republic of Georgia. His loyalty to McCain is such that he worked without pay from the late summer of 2007 until the spring of 2008, when the campaign was broke. He shared a small, barren office with two or three other aides. The one decorative touch was a framed copy of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, the first piece of legislation signed into law to call for the removal from power of Saddam Hussein, an act that McCain had co-sponsored and Scheunemann had helped to draft. Scheunemann unhesitatingly presented "the global struggle against Islamic extremism" (he did not use a more neutral formulation like "terrorism") as "the defining struggle of our time."

Scheunemann had a few things to say about Barack Obama's foreign-policy positions. "The evolution of Obama is fascinating," he said. "In 2004, he said he was against pulling out of Iraq. Then he moved farther left. In May, 2007, he voted to cut off supplemental funding for all the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq."



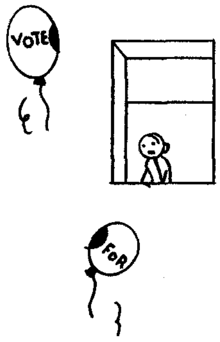
"Tonight's top story—I tell the liberals to go to hell!"

(This was a hundred-and-twenty-billion-dollar bill that Obama opposed because the Bush Administration would not give a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq; it passed.) “It was a supremely irresponsible vote done out of pure political calculation about where he needed to be for the Democratic primaries. McCain’s position”—for increasing the troop level by thirty thousand—“was not popular even within the Republican Party. Obama engaged in cynical political calculation. McCain said, and meant with all his heart, that he would rather lose an election and win a war. He didn’t flinch. On a matter of supreme importance—American forces in harm’s way—you really see the character of the two men.”

I asked him what he thought of Obama’s promise to talk to the Iranian leadership. “I’m searching for the word for the world view that has such incredible hubris that you believe that if you talk to anybody, no matter what they represent, you can get a result.” He made a show of searching for the word, and then he found it: “Laughable. The idea that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons because they don’t have direct negotiations with the President of the United States! Obama has tried to walk back from his stance. It’s a facile view, which has taken hold in many think tanks, here and in Europe, that there’s a grand bargain to be had in Iran. Obama thinks they don’t really want nukes—they want a summit meeting. It’s naïve.”

Barack Obama isn’t the only politician that the McCain campaign considers weak on foreign policy. First place would probably go to President Bush. That can’t be an overt theme of the campaign, of course, but the anger at Bush in the McCain camp is palpable. McCain is a military man; Bush is guilty of the cardinal sin of committing American prestige to a military operation, and sending American troops into battle, with an incompetent war plan. He played the tough guy and didn’t follow through; he made terrible misjudgments about foreign leaders (Vladimir Putin, to McCain’s mind, was at the top of that list, because of Bush’s early announcement that he had looked into Putin’s eyes and got a sense of his soul); he didn’t work effectively with the other major powers; and he dishonored America’s reputation in the world.

“Americans are really angry at the Bush Administration for doing Iraq badly, and Senator McCain shares that view,” Kori Schake, another member of McCain’s foreign-policy staff, who sits about six inches away from Randy Scheunemann in the same small office, told me. Schake, a professor at West Point, might plausibly be cast as a heroine in a James Bond movie—the sort of character who speaks several languages and is also an Aikido master. “Secretary Rumsfeld did his job badly,” she continued. “In the perfect storm that was the Bush Administration, you had Rumsfeld’s dominating personality, Bush’s support of him as somebody pushing change, and the marginalization of the National Security Council staff”—on which Schake was serving at the time. Toward the end of our conversation, she remarked, “Having been around Bush a bit, there’s a groundedness about McCain. He doesn’t dig in his heels to prove he’s tough. He thinks, and when he feels he’s hit bedrock, that’s the principle that determines his course of action.”



Recently, Bush’s foreign policy has moved distinctly left of where it was during his first term. This may represent a change of heart on Bush’s part—as well as the increasing influence of Condoleezza Rice, now that she is Secretary of State, and the replacement of Rumsfeld by the more moderate Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense. On several of the most pressing issues in foreign affairs, the Bush of 2008 has positions that are closer to Obama’s than to McCain’s. Obama has promised to get personally involved in Middle East peace negotiations as soon as he takes office. McCain has not. Bush, in his second term, has, though with minimal results. The Bush Administration has talked about the desirability of a “general time horizon” for withdrawing troops from Iraq, the sort of language that McCain, during the primaries, took pains to attack; the Obama campaign called it “a step in the right direction.” McCain has since welcomed the idea in a general way, though he also said, “An artificial timetable based on political expediency would have led to disaster and could still turn success into defeat.” For McCain, carelessness with American—and, in particular, Presidential—prestige is unacceptable, and there is nothing worse than America’s entering, or remaining in, an international engagement with its options limited in advance. (McCain was furious at President Clinton when he announced that he would not send ground troops to Kosovo.)

When Russia sent troops and bombers into Georgia, it provided McCain with a perfect opportunity to differentiate himself from Bush, who reacted in his second-term manner, speaking cautiously and calling for “a return by the parties to the status quo.” McCain appeared before the press and read a blistering statement. “Russia should immediately and unconditionally cease its military operations and withdraw all forces from sovereign Georgian territory,” he said, and he called on the United States to convene emergency sessions of NATO and the U.N. Security Council and work with the European Union in order “to put diplomatic pressure on Russia to reverse this perilous course it has chosen.”

Obama’s initial response was plainly based on a determination not to take sides. He issued a statement that said, “I strongly condemn the outbreak of violence in Georgia, and urge an immediate end to armed conflict. Now is the time for Georgia and Russia to show restraint, and to avoid an escalation to full-scale war.” McCain wanted international organizations to become involved in order to get Russia out of Georgia; Obama wanted them to support “a peaceful resolution to this crisis.”

A few hours later, having seen increasing evidence of Russia’s aggression in news reports, Obama made a second brief statement, during a stopover in California, in which he more openly took Georgia’s side and said that Russia had “invaded” Georgia, without quite calling on Russia to withdraw.

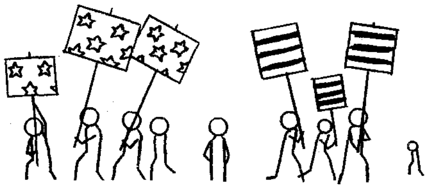
Three days after that, Obama issued yet another statement, a long, complicated, careful one, which he delivered in person. It was, characteristically, far more temperate than McCain’s, but closer in substance: now there was a good guy and a bad guy. “No matter how this conflict started,” Obama said, “Russia has escalated it well beyond the dispute over South Ossetia and invaded another country. Russia has escalated its military campaign through strategic bombing and the movement of its ground forces into the heart of Georgia. There is no possible justification for these attacks." He ended by saying that "the United States and Europe must support the people of Georgia" and that "the United States and the international community must speak out strongly against this aggression, and for peace and security."

That last statement came after the campaign had consulted one of its foreign-policy experts, a Stanford professor of international relations named Michael McFaul. McFaul, who had never met Obama, was then given more than an hour of the candidate's time, on a plane trip from the two candidates' appearances at Saddleback Church in Southern California, to Reno, Nevada. McFaul was a member of the Phoenix Initiative, but he had also participated in a more conservative effort to develop a Democratic foreign-policy blueprint, run by the Democratic Leadership Council—one whose report was called "With All Our Might." He is part of the wing of the Democratic foreign-policy world that likes to call itself "Wilsonian," or "democracy-promoting," made up of those who tend to support American military interventions on humanitarian grounds. They sometimes find common cause with Republican neocons, who no longer like to be called that. (Robert Kagan, one of the most prominent neocons and an occasional speechwriter for the McCain campaign, said that he would prefer to be called a proponent of the "indispensable nation" view of the United States' role in the world.) McFaul told me that after he and Obama had talked for a while about why they thought the Russian reaction to Georgia's use of force in South Ossetia was unjustified, Obama said, "It *is* about a big nation attacking a small nation, about sovereignty being violated."

"Obama's greatest challenge," Anthony Lake said when we talked, "is to be a unifying figure *and* show he's tough enough to deal with Republican attacks. They're still using the same old crap they always have, and they started right away." Lake, like many of the Democratic elders around Obama, knows how effective Republican attacks can be.

In his acceptance speech at the Convention and in the first debate—his two big-audience occasions on foreign policy—Obama mentioned coöperation but emphasized aggressive action much more strongly. In that way, the Obama campaign is like a symphony orchestra, with the need for international coöperation as the string section and the necessity for aggressive action as the horns. Both sections are always playing, but usually one or the other is playing louder. During the fall campaign, the horns have dominated the strings. "What you're selling" in a Presidential campaign, the previous Democratic nominee, John Kerry, told me, "is, you have a better way of keeping America safe, of making it stronger in the world. The Republicans are paper tigers. They have made America less safe. . . . The job of a President is to put America first."

Although Obama hasn't changed his sixteen-month deadline for troop withdrawal from Iraq, several of his aides stressed to me that he also says he would leave a "residual force" of unspecified size. On the Middle East, under the tutelage of Dennis Ross (who surprised some of his colleagues by leaving government after the end of the Clinton Administration to work at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a region-specific, and enthusiastically Zionist, think tank), Obama has become more staunchly supportive of Israel in his rhetoric; Ross accompanied Obama on his summer trip to the Middle East, and when I spoke with him he emphasized that Obama's campaign promise to conduct early peace negotiations could be kept without Obama's personally hosting the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and conducting the talks. On Iran, Susan Rice told me, "Obama has never said he'd sit down with Ahmadinejad. Obama has said repeatedly that he would be willing to meet with appropriate leaders of Iran and other hostile countries at the time and place of his choosing when it can serve U.S. national interests. As for Ahmadinejad, he is not the Supreme Leader and may not be President of Iran after June of '09."



The rhetorical high point of the section on foreign policy in Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention—he took the stage after a small parade of retired generals, including Scott Gration, who made brief remarks—was a couple of lines in which he taunted McCain for not being as militarily aggressive as he is. "We must take out Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants if we have them in our sights," he said. "John McCain likes to say that he'll follow bin Laden to the gates of Hell, but he won't even follow him to the cave where he lives!"

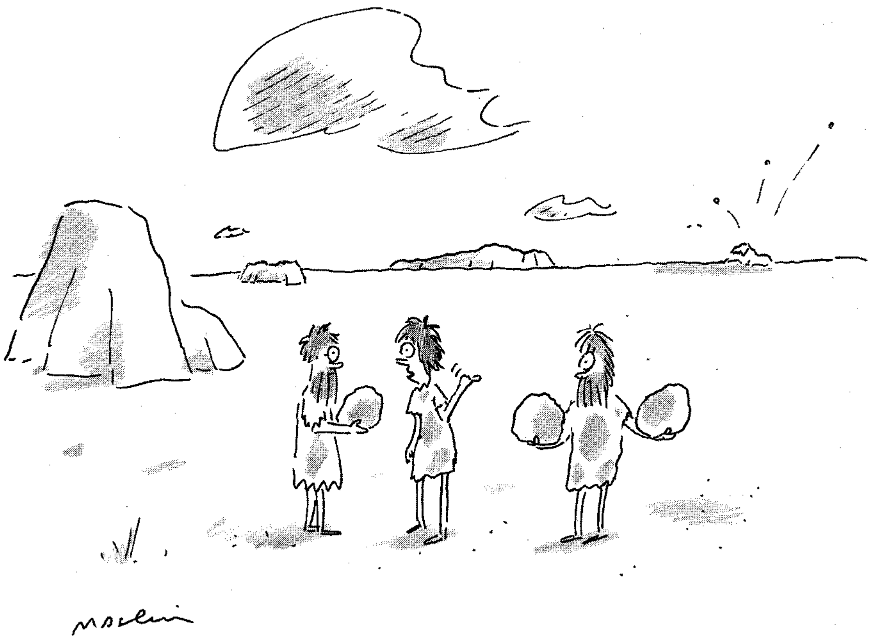
There's a lot behind that remark. In August, 2007, Obama gave a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington in which he set forth in detail his interventionist side. (The choice of venue was probably not an accident, since interventionist Democrats like to identify themselves with Wilson.) If the enemy is Al Qaeda, he explained, then Iraq was the wrong place for the United States to invest its energy: "The first step must be getting off the wrong battlefield in Iraq, and taking the fight to the terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan." The Bush Administration had made a terrible mistake in starving the American military effort in Afghanistan so that it could wage war in Iraq; one reason Obama wanted to pull troops out of Iraq was to redeploy them to Afghanistan, where the Taliban is on the rise again.

Bin Laden is widely believed to be holed up in the mountainous tribal areas of northwestern Pakistan. At the Wilson Center, Obama made explicit the promise that he would allude to in his acceptance speech: that if he had "actionable intelligence," he would be willing to launch a unilateral strike inside Pakistan, in the hope of hitting bin Laden and his forces. This is the one area where McCain's position is far more cautious than Obama's. During the two candidates' first debate, last month, McCain said, "I'm not prepared at this time to cut off aid to Pakistan. So I'm not prepared to threaten it, as Senator Obama apparently wants to do, as he has said that he would announce military strikes into Pakistan. We've got to get the support of the people . . . of Pakistan. He said that he would launch military strikes into Pakistan. Now, you don't do that. You don't say that out loud. If you have to do things, you have to do things, and you work with the Pakistani government."

The argument against attacking bin Laden directly is that Pakistan, of all the unstable places in the world, is the most dangerous, because it has an arsenal estimated to include more than a hundred nuclear weapons. The state is shaky, and its civilian leader, Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto, is new and untested; Islamist terrorist groups, their allies in the Pakistani intelligence service, and the military are all serious alternative power centers.

President Bush initially didn't attack the tribal areas because he was afraid that, if he did, the government of Pervez Musharraf would fall. When Bush began to tire of Musharraf and to tilt away from him, and then started a program of air strikes and incursions into Pakistan, it coincided with a period of rising instability there. In the name of encouraging genuine political competition in Pakistan, the Bush Administration prodded Musharraf to allow Benazir Bhutto to return and begin a political campaign. She was assassinated by Islamist terrorists. Musharraf left office. Islamists began to stage significant terrorist attacks in response to the American strikes in the tribal areas. The most frightening possibility in Pakistan is that an Islamist government could come to power, turn its attention eastward, and try to reclaim Kashmir from India—also a nuclear power—just as Russia tried to reclaim South Ossetia from Georgia.

McCain prides himself on his knowledge of Pakistan. When we talked, he reminded me that he had travelled to Waziristan, in the tribal areas, a fact that he managed to work into the first Presidential debate, along with his unwillingness to threaten unilateral American military action in Pakistan. "Obama says he's going to drop bombs on Pakistan," Stephen Biegun, another of McCain's inner circle of foreign-policy advisers, told me. "You don't say on the campaign trail that we've got to bomb another country unless you mean to alienate a country. What about the safety and security of Pakistan's military arsenal? What you see there is a candidate who's very green. There's an impatience. Obama displays an extraordinary impatience that looks like enthusiasm."



"You're offering me one rock, and he's offering two—whom do you think I'm going to marry?"

• •

One of the skills of a master politician like Obama is being able to project more than one possibility about himself—and being young, without much of a record of political accomplishments, makes that easier. One Obama is a visionary who reframes American foreign policy to meet the needs of a new era in which states are less important, America is less powerful, and collaborative efforts are the only way to get things done. Another Obama—the one who chose Joe Biden as his running mate, while McCain was picking Sarah Palin—respects, and wants the respect of, the Democratic foreign-policy establishment; he wouldn't be inclined toward a wholesale refashioning of American foreign policy. Yet another Obama is a liberal who is keenly aware of the need to forestall ferociously unfair—but effective—attacks from the right, and who may feel that he has to demonstrate that he has the toughness to take military action. Nobody can tell which of these Obamas will obtain, or in what measure, if he wins, but what he does in Pakistan would be an early and unavoidable indicator—more so than what he does in Iraq, where he has left himself more room to maneuver.

Barack Obama and John McCain came into this long campaign with ideas about America's role in the world that were more obviously different from those of the two major party candidates in the past few elections. This campaign has been an argument not about how to conduct the Cold War or the war on terror or the war in Iraq but about what American foreign policy should be after those wars have ended. Obama, who got where he is through a complicated process of self-definition, is much more nimble than McCain at dealing with changing circumstances. McCain, a third-generation military aristocrat who got where he is through pure bullheaded determination, is less adaptable. The result may be that Obama will outmaneuver McCain politically, but on foreign policy, over the course of the campaign, McCain will have left an imprint on Obama, and Obama will not have left one on McCain. ♦

PROFILES

THE ORACLE

The many lives of Arianna Huffington.

BY LAUREN COLLINS

Arianna Huffington's best-selling biographies of Maria Callas (1981) and Pablo Picasso (1988) both open with anecdotes intended to illuminate an essential truth about the subject's fate. Were she to write her own life, Huffington said not long ago, she would begin in the spring of 1969. Huffington—then Stassinopoulos—and her mother, Elli, had moved from Athens to London, where they lived in a rented flat in Manchester Square, so that Arianna could take the entrance exams for Cambridge. (She had resolved to attend the university a couple of years earlier, after seeing a picture of it in a magazine. "It was a perfect example of what we now call visualization," she later wrote.) Finally, one afternoon, a telegram arrived: "AWARDED. GIRTON. EXHIBITION." Neither Arianna nor her mother understood the term "exhibition," so they called Arianna's tutor, who explained that she had won a partial scholarship to Girton College.

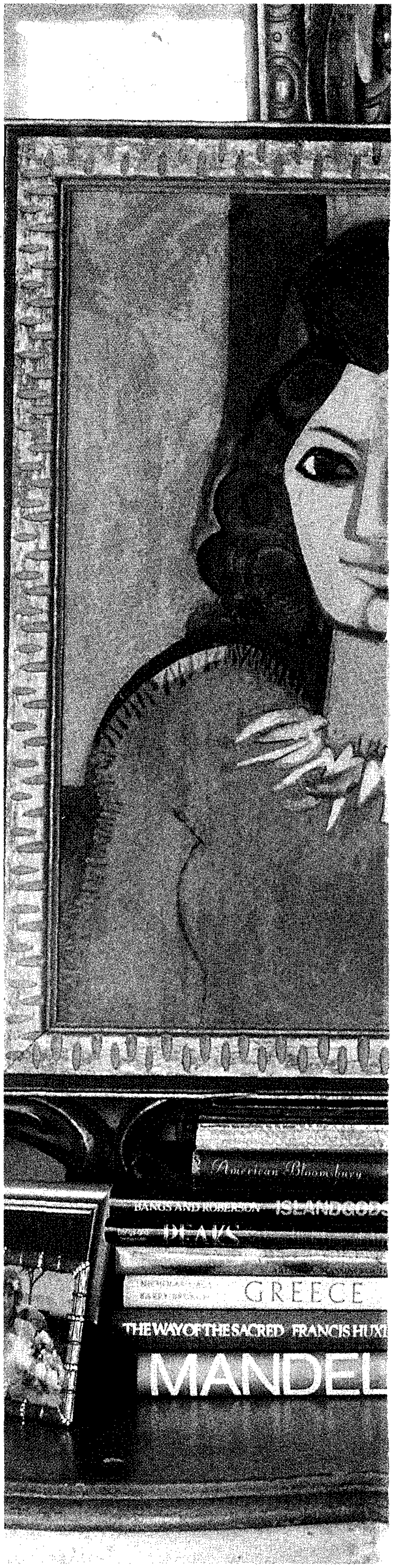
Huffington entered Cambridge that fall. She lived in a single room, with a heater she fed with shillings. Her Greek-inflected English was better suited to the classroom than to the class prejudices of her fellow-students. "One day, I said something in a group like 'horseback riding,'" she said recently, "and I was literally laughed at, like, 'What other kind of riding is there? *Donkey* riding?' "

During a student-group fair, Huffington toured the chambers of the university's debating society. Since girlhood, she had possessed a spiritual impulse, studying Hinduism and fasting on the name day of the Virgin Mary. The Cambridge Union became another cathedral. "I just threw myself into it," she recalled. "I went to every debate. I must literally have sat there with my mouth open. I was so spellbound by the spectacle of great speakers and people being moved or angered by their words."

This may sound familiar. The slack-jawed outsider eventually became the society's president ("Starryanna Comeacroppalos" to her less kind peers), who became a conservative commentator and consort ("The Greek Pudding"), who became an Upper East Side socialite ("The most upwardly mobile Greek since Icarus"), who became a Republican political wife, a divorcée cable comedienne, a self-help writer, a progressive, an early environmentalist, a failed gubernatorial candidate, a blogger, an Internet mogul, and, through it all, one of the Anglophone world's most nimble and ubiquitous communicators. Her enduring infatuation with the power of chat has led her to rarely, if ever, turn down an invitation to talk, whether on CNN (so far this year, she's done "Larry King Live" a dozen times) or at the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems (mark your calendar for May, 2009).

One afternoon last spring, Huffington, who lives in Los Angeles, was in Seattle, having agreed to serve as the keynote speaker at an annual Planned Parenthood benefit luncheon. (A fan of the cause, she waived her fee, and even, when a collection plate went around, got out her checkbook.) Long a regular on the conference circuit, she is often found in the sorts of places that require lanyards. Her vocabulary is full of business-book terms—"aha moment," "meme." When she hangs up the phone, she sometimes says, "I'm jumping off." At night, she hides her BlackBerrys (she has three) in the bathroom.

Seated at a table of philanthropists at Seattle's Bell Harbor International Conference Center, Huffington produced a couple of hard-boiled eggs—food as fuel—from her pocketbook and deposited them on her plate. She is almost six feet tall, and has a tiny forehead, a peaked upper lip, and hair with the lustre of a


American Bloomsbury
BANGS AND ROBERTSON ISLANDGODS
DEATS
GREECE
THE WAY OF THE SACRED FRANCIS HUX
MANDEL

Huffington at home, with a painting by Françoise Gilot. Photograph by Jonathan Becker.

copper pot. She is approachable, but, when approached, she assumes a default posture: hands clasped, one foot pointed in front, like a gymnast about to begin the floor exercise. Her comportment is flirty yet disciplined—wearing a ruffled blouse, as she did in Seattle, she could have been channelling a French maid or George Washington. Eventually, she ascended the stage. "Now trust me, I have two teenage daughters," she began. "I would love it if abstinence was the way to go."

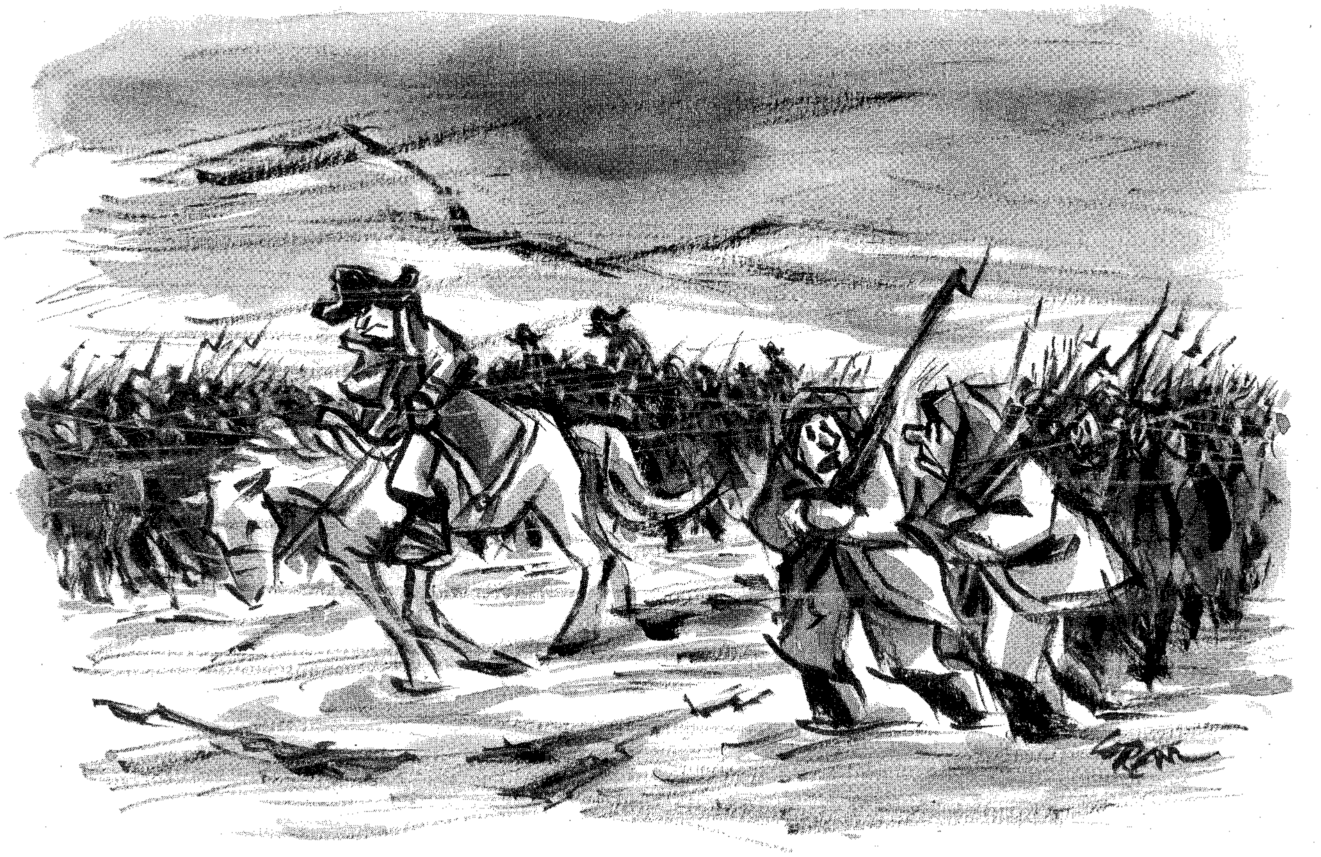
The cheek and the candor that characterize Huffington's public speaking also inform the Huffington Post, which Huffington, together with the former A.O.L. executive Kenneth Lerer, launched in 2005. The site—"an Internet newspaper"—comprises a news aggregator, six "verticals" (if the Huffington Post were a broadsheet, these would be sections B to G), and a group blog, to which around two thousand people contribute, including, famously, such friends of Huffington as Ari Emanuel, Alec Baldwin, Larry David, Nora Ephron, and John Cusack.

Although Huffington was known as a conservative for most of her life, the Huffington Post is a kind of liberal foil to the Drudge Report. According to Nielsen Online, in February it drew 3.7 million unique visitors, surpassing Drudge for the first time. Its advertisers have included Starbucks, Volkswagen, Home Depot, and the *Times*. In August, the site logged 5.1 million unique visitors. This election season, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama—whom Huffington supported over Clinton, in part because of his opposition to the war in Iraq—attempted to harness the voting power of its impassioned readership, with Clinton contributing posts about child poverty and the Bush Administration's threats to reproductive rights, and Obama justifying his position on the FISA bill and clarifying his relationship to the Reverend Jeremiah Wright.

Aesthetically, the site recalls a muckraking tabloid, with its splashy, often very funny headlines ("MCCAIN WANTS A TIME OUT—BUT WHY?") and exclamation points. Its editorial sensibility can be equally blunt. Nonpolitical links and posts tend to fall within entertaining, if inelegant, categories: gee-whiz ("SOUTH KOREA CLONED DOGS FOR WOMAN"), health-alert ("WHY FATTY FISH IS GOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN"), pop-psych ("4 SUREFIRE WAYS TO RELAX"), go-girl ("ANNE HATHAWAY—IT'S TIME TO GET SMART ABOUT THE MEN YOU DATE!").

Fifty per cent of the Huffington Post's traffic comes from its political coverage. Lefty umbrage—at President Bush, at the war, at the Patriot Act, at John McCain's five-hundred-and-twenty-dollar Ferragamo loafers and his "spoiler" role in the Wall Street bailout—with a satiric bent is its signature mode. When news broke that McCain had picked Sarah Palin as his running mate, the Huffington Post had within hours posted shots of her as Miss Wasilla 1984. In the course of the Presidential race, the site has supplemented commentary with original reporting by six paid political editors and reporters and, as part of a project called OffTheBus, eleven thousand citizen journalists.

The site has produced big scoops, several of which have reverberated throughout the race. First, one of the citizen journalists, Mayhill Fowler, reported Obama's remark about the frustration of "bitter" small-town voters who "cling to guns or



"Up till now, his foreign-policy credentials have been impeccable."

religion." Then Fowler incited Bill Clinton to call the *Vanity Fair* writer Todd Purdum, who had published a story suggesting that Clinton was becoming a liability to the Party, a "scumbag." Because Fowler had failed to identify herself as a journalist, some of the more entrenched members of the press accused her of compromising professional standards, but it was hard to see what she had compromised, other than some Obama votes and Clinton's dignity, given that both incidents took place before onlookers.

After McCain's assertion, in September, that he would "suspend" his campaign to attend to the financial crisis, Sam Stein, a Huffington Post reporter, called fifteen McCain headquarters in swing states, and found that none of them had interrupted their operations. A blog entry by Huffington published in May, titled "What John McCain Told Me, and What It Says About How Far He's Fallen," was also explosive, but murkier. In it, Huffington wrote that, at a dinner party some years earlier, McCain had remarked to her that he hadn't voted for George W. Bush. McCain's spokespeople have denied the story. Huffington, in any case, is not known for her discretion. "I've got to be careful after the John McCain thing," her friend the talk-show host Tavis Smiley told me. "I don't know where what I say is going to end up."

After Huffington's talk to Planned Parenthood, she visited the Microsoft campus to moderate a panel discussion with Mark Penn, the Hillary Clinton strategist, and Cyrus Krohn, the eCampaign director for the Republican National Committee. Waiting in the green room, she pumped the men for intelligence.

"Florida, Michigan—what's going to happen?" she asked Penn.

Krohn told Huffington that the R.N.C. had registered ten thousand friends on Facebook. "It's a great time to be a Republican," he said. "There's nowhere to go but up."

It is a measure of Huffington's standing that even Republicans feel obliged to curry her favor. She clearly relishes her role as an essential conduit of gossip and ideas. When I asked her to name her favorite book, she mentioned the epigraph to "Howard's End," and said, "I remember the E. M. Forster line about 'Only connect' being a big aha moment."

Dish is her capital—the means by which she makes connections and maintains them. Because she defines the agenda for the Huffington Post, which defines the agenda for so many readers, passing a tidbit her way is, in a sense, an investment. Proprietary hints are the dividend. "She knows the best of everything, from the best person to do yoga with to the best person to do your facials," Laurie David, the environmental activist, said recently. "If you need anything, you ask Arianna." In the time we spent together, Huffington let slip details on Jerry Brown ("Going to run for governor again") and Sergey Brin ("His wife is pregnant!").

Huffington's business and spiritual pursuits merge in her interest in human-potential movements, the sorts of popular groundswell that, as she once wrote, will provide us, in "a new age that is being born," with "an opening for great possibilities of new being, for a breakthrough in our evolution." Once or twice a week, she leads a highly curated cast of friends on a hike. "She's an inspiration to me," Lynda Resnick, the pomegranate-juice magnate, said. "It was Laurie David's birthday, in 2006. We were up in the Santa Monica mountains, and there was a vista, and we were sipping champagne out of splits with straws and eating soft cheese and hard salami. Laurie had just started to produce 'An Inconvenient Truth,' Arianna's Web site was going gangbusters, Rita Wilson"—Tom Hanks's wife—"was about to appear in 'Chicago' on Broadway. 'What are you doing outside of your comfort zone?' Arianna asked me. And I said, 'My biggest dream is to give back all I know about marketing.'"

Micah Sifry, the Internet entrepreneur, pointed out that part of Huffington's success on the Web lies in the fact that she is attuned to its conversational quality. "It's not just that she's getting attention," he said. "She's sharing attention, too." Many other people heralded her abilities as a "connector," including Kenneth Lerer. "Here are the pockets: L.A., New York, D.C. Tell me somebody else who can bring those three cities together," he said. "With Arianna, it's not six degrees of separation, it's two." At times, her world can seem echoey. "David Geffen has already declared for Obama, and many other Hollywood power brokers, who are not ready to go public yet, are making it known in private that they are in the ABH (Anyone But Hillary) camp," she asserted in the Los Angeles *Times*, in December, 2006, as though entertainment executives were crucial bellwethers of the American polity.

Back in Seattle, Huffington was finishing off the day with a lecture at Town Hall. Pen tucked into the front of her blouse, she took the stage. "I just saw Mark Penn at the Microsoft conference," she began.

Several days earlier, Huffington had appeared at Google's offices in New York City to promote her twelfth book, "Right Is Wrong: How the Lunatic Fringe Hijacked America, Shredded the Constitution, and Made Us All Less Safe (And What You Need to Know to End the Madness)." The title pretty much sums it up: puns ("Dim Bulbs: Congress's Low Wattage Energy Bill"), clichés ("the right-wing lunatics are running the Republican asylum"), and a lot of extra words ("'Al Qaeda is on the run in Iraq' still had the crowd roaring its approval and holding up metaphorical disposable lighters") deployed in the service of ramming home some dubious points about the media and some good ones about the war, and health care, with an overheated, performative air that somehow recalls both Susan Powter and Michael Moore.

Huffington is defter in her appearances. "The media mouths the same talking point, which is that Iraq is a 'mixed bag,'" she said, standing amid a jumble of oversized blue, green, and yellow Google building blocks. "Now, Iraq is not a mixed bag. Iraq is an unqualified catastrophe. Iraq is a mixed bag only in the sense that you go to the doctor and the doctor says to you, 'You have a brain tumor but the good news is that your acne has cleared.'"

After a few minutes, it was time for a Q. & A. session. "Tell me who you are and what you're doing here so I can also learn," Huffington said.

A young man with a frizzy ponytail approached the microphone. "First, let me tell you, your hair looks fabulous in person," he began.

"Thank you! It's called Greek peasant hair," Huffington responded. "Very thick, you know."

"Why do you think that candidates like Kucinich and Ron Paul are unelectable?" he continued. "What comes first, being completely honest, or being unelectable?"

"Well, I actually would treat those two candidates separately," Huffington said. "Because Ron Paul, even though he was very solid on the war, if you dig a little deeper he has some very kooky and strange views on a lot of issues. So I think Ron Paul is unelectable because he is largely a kook with a good view on Iraq." The crowd laughed.

She segued into a fluent disquisition on the Bush Administration's flawed decision to focus on Iraq at the expense of Afghanistan, and concluded, "Yes, we want peace, but we also agree on enemies. And so that is a very important distinction that Obama has made, and Kucinich failed to make."

Huffington fielded a question from a software engineer. "You are very famous for a very distinguished set of mannerisms," he said. "I'm wondering whether you like watching impressions of yourself."

"Actually, Tracey Ullman is a genius," Huffington said. "I don't know if you saw her little sketch of me doing Pilates while I'm talking on my BlackBerry. I got a call from my Pilates teacher saying, 'I want to absolutely swear to you, I did not tell her that you do Pilates!'" She added, "I'm delighted to hear that she's going to be doing another series. But I do *not* sleep with my laptop."

To professional funny people, Huffington is irresistible, both as friend and as fodder. She possesses the golden comedic ratio: a mind that is as flexible as her body is unwieldy. Arianna walks into a bar, Arianna drops a sparkly earring. (The bar is The Four Seasons.) Arianna gets into a car, Arianna bumps her head. Pratfalls are best performed by an ugly man or a beautiful woman, and Huffington, with her zany energy, can recall the heroine of a screwball comedy. Once, at a dinner party, a BlackBerry melted in her handbag, because she put the bag too close to an open fire. Another day, I called her on her cell phone and the line went staticky. "My hair is all wet!" Huffington said, over the din of a blow-dryer.

Last year, Huffington went out to dinner with Charlie Rose. Stepped on a grate, broke her ankle. (She was wearing a pair of Yves Saint Laurent platform heels.) Rose recommended a foot and ankle specialist at the Hospital for Special Surgery, Dr. Rock Positano. He is now a contributor to the Huffington Post. In the course of two days in May, Huffington invited the following people to be Huffington Post bloggers: someone at a book signing who had met her at Rob Reiner's house; a fifteen-year-old lecture attendee; a bookstore owner; the Asperger's-afflicted teenage son of a radio d.j.; a woman, dressed exclusively in green, who was trying to stop insecticide spraying. Huffington is profligate in her offers. At Google, she urged the audience to e-mail her blog submissions, saying, "I mean, I'll give you my own e-mail address."

The pursuit of influence—the ability to command attention and to change minds—not money, seems to be Huffington's driving quest. "Mmm, you smell so good! What are you wearing?" a fan asked one day, at a book signing. Huffington replied, "Samples! I can bring them through airport security." She is a limousine liberal—one night in Los Angeles, as we were riding in a chauffeured Prius, Huffington remarked, "Can you imagine having to drive to work every day in this traffic?"—but she is not vain or particular, in the way of many of the Davos class, about food, clothing, or lodging. One day, I asked her what she was wearing: earrings given to her by Lynda Resnick, a watch from Steve Martin, a silk button-down blouse made by her friend the designer Domenico Vacca. She could have been a paper doll.

Harmless but shrewd small talk is a Huffington specialty: the first time we met, she had, within ten minutes, complimented me on my shoes, my jacket, my bag, and my dress. Critics and friends invoke a talent for friendship as one of her defining qualities, as, through the years, has much of her press. In the higher echelons of New York and Los Angeles society, merely asking a question about someone else is taken as evidence of savantlike people skills, but Huffington's attempts at establishing intimacy can seem almost poignantly forced. "How do you recharge?" she will inquire of a relative stranger. "What is your favorite food?" Billy Kimball, the comedy writer, said, "She has that European woman's gift of listening to you in a way that makes a person feel simultaneously fascinating and foolish. The person kind of fills in the end of the sentence, saying a little more than he necessarily wanted to."

Whether she's Icarus or Oprah—with her waxen good will, she's probably something of both—Huffington projects curiosity. Last year, Tom Freston, the former MTV Networks executive, gave her an iPod loaded with world music. He recalled, "She says, I really love those songs by Alpha Blondy, who's an Ivory Coast reggae star who sings about liberation and the oppression of black men." Despite a seven-steps air, her kindnesses are frequent, and are not limited to any particular caste. Jose Antonio Vargas, a twenty-seven-year-old reporter at the Washington *Post*, told me that Huffington introduced herself to him at a Washington Press Club Foundation dinner after overhearing someone mistake him for a busboy.

Socializing is a form of work—it takes energy, it pays off—and Huffington applies herself to it as assiduously as she does to any other task. "When I was in England, I would literally, like, watch everything," she said. "I would watch pop-culture shows, I would read pop-culture magazines. I remember sitting there and watching 'Laugh-In.' And I did the same when I moved to New York. I made a point of studying what I had missed." In "Right Is Wrong," she writes that members of the Bush Administration, as alarmists, are "the equivalent of the 1927 Yankees, the Steel Curtain Pittsburgh Steelers, or the Showtime-era Lakers of Magic, Kareem and James Worthy"—an impressive catalogue for someone who watches sports "very occasionally with friends."

Laurie David met Huffington for the first time at her own house, where she and her husband were hosting an event for Antonio Villaraigosa, the mayor of Los Angeles. "Arianna made a beeline over to me and said, 'Hello, we must hike,'" David recalled. "That's one of her courting methods when she wants to meet somebody or get to know somebody." Such a targeted approach might come off badly among more reticent types, but Huffington's circle of friends is a self-selecting group. Lynda Resnick explained, "She, like me—we love powerful people."

In May, Huffington attended the *Time* 100 Gala, a banquet affair at Rose Hall at Jazz at Lincoln Center, honoring "the most influential people in the world." (Huffington was named to the list in

2006.) After a cocktail reception, she made her way to Table 16, where her companions included the hotel executive Gerald Inzerillo and her old friend Mort Zuckerman. As the guests ate lamb chops and asparagus (Huffington, Europeanly, plucked the spears from the plate with her fingers), Amy Poehler and Seth Meyers, of "Saturday Night Live," performed a standup routine.

"You know, Seth, *Time* magazine continues to be incredibly influential," Poehler said. "In 2007, the circulation was just around 3.4 million, which is *great* for a magazine. Just O.K. for a YouTube video, but pretty good for a magazine."

"Not cats falling out of trees, but really good," Meyers said. The allusion, to a viral video, caused Huffington's face to crinkle with glee.

Poehler and Meyers proceeded to roast some honorees: Brian Williams, George Clooney, Dr. Mehmet Oz. "He is a cardiothoracic surgeon and a chef, so he's a doctor that cooks," Poehler said of Oz. "Which puts him on top of another list, 'Most Popular on JDate.' "

Huffington leaned close to Zuckerman: "What's JDate?"

Toward the end of the evening, Indra Nooyi, the C.E.O. of PepsiCo, and the mother of two, gave a toast. She spoke of "tradeoffs, regrets, losses, pain," as Huffington nodded. "Fame is rot; daughters are the thing," Nooyi concluded, quoting J. M. Barrie. Huffington locked eyes with me, across the table, and lifted her hand to her heart.

For the finale, a newly wed Mariah Carey, in a spangly silver halter dress, appeared with a six-piece band. Zuckerman passed a note around the table: "If you can write the lyrics, I'll give you $1,000." Carey's performance, though, was surprisingly affecting. As she belted out the high notes of "Hero," Zuckerman put his hand over Huffington's. They held on for a while, letting go, eventually, to check their e-mail.

MySpace and Facebook have, in a way, made social climbing an outdated concept. Social climbing is now social networking, and the collecting of people is an unabashed pastime. Huffington's friends speak admiringly of her conquests. "If Arianna wants to be your friend, I mean, give up, you're like a weak swimmer in a strong tide," Bill Maher told me. "I went with her to some big

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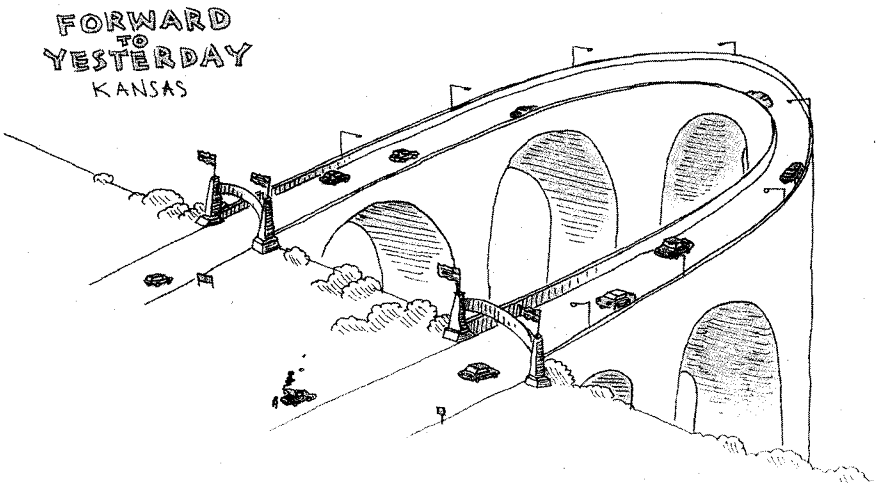
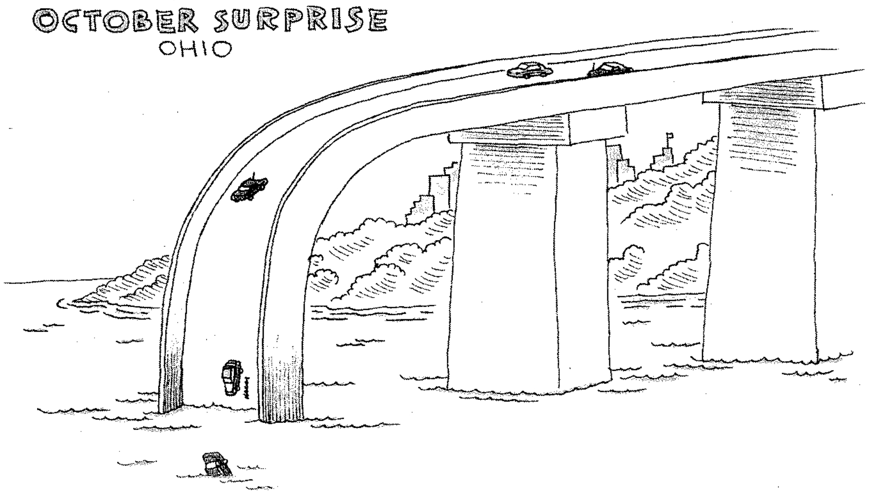
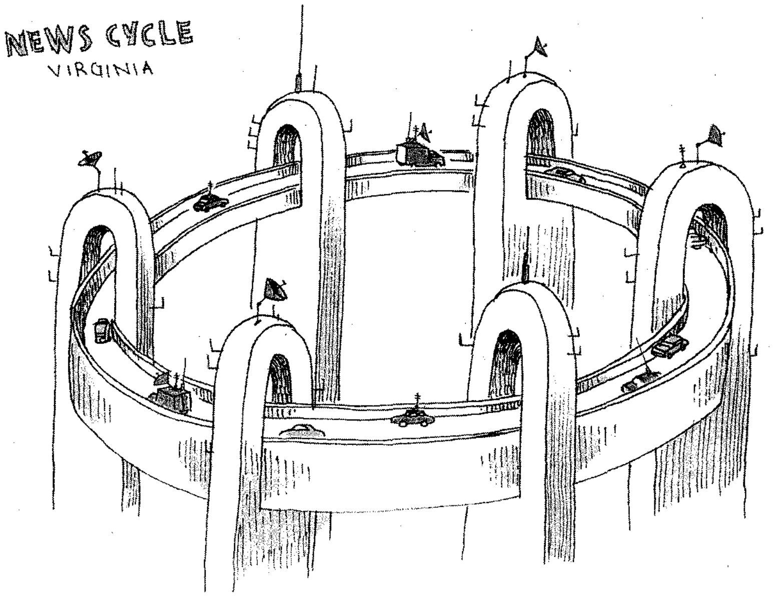
SKETCHBOOK BY MICK STEVENS

BRIDGES TO NOWHERE







party—I was, like, 'Oh, where's Arianna?' and, next thing I know, she's sitting on the couch with Rupert Murdoch, chatting away like the old friends of the world."

Plenty of people, anyway, want to endear themselves to her. One day, I attempted to make her acquaintance on Facebook, and received an automated reply: "Arianna has too many friends."

THE WAY

The sky is random. Even calling it "sky"
is an attempt to make a meaning, say,
a shape, from the humanly visible part
of shapelessness in endlessness. It's what
we do, in some ways it's entirely what
we do—and so the devastating rose

of a galaxy's being born, the fatal lamé
of another's being torn and dying, we frame
in the lenses of our super-duper telescopes the way
we would those other completely incomprehensible
fecund and dying subjects at a family picnic.
Making them "subjects." "Rose." "Lamé." The way

our language scissors the enormity to scales
we can tolerate. The way we gild and rubricate
in memory, or edit out selectively.
An infant's gentle snoring, even, apportions
the eternal. When they moved to the boonies,
Dorothy Wordsworth measured their walk

to Crewkerne—then the nearest town—
by pushing a device invented especially
for such a project, a "perambulator": seven miles.
Her brother William pottered at his daffodils poem.
Ten thousand saw I at a glance: by which he meant
too many to count, but could only say it in counting.

—*Albert Goldbarth*

The first time Huffington came to America, she found herself in York, Pennsylvania. She was fifteen, and a summer exchange student. The second time, she found herself in Manhattan. She was twenty-three, and the author of "The Female Woman," a rebuttal to Germaine Greer's "The Female Eunuch." Huffington has written that, to promote the book, her publisher had scheduled her to appear on television with Barbara Walters: "This didn't faze me, since I had no idea who Barbara Walters was and had never heard of the 'Today' show." A decade later, Walters was a bridesmaid in Huffington's wedding. Walters told me, "Boy, she came to New York, and, little by little, you knew who Arianna Stassinopoulos was."

Huffington's father, Constantine, was a journalist and management consultant; her mother, Elli, came from a Russian family that had moved to Greece after the revolution. Constantine and Elli met at a sanatorium in Kifissia, a suburb of Athens, after the war—he was recovering after being incarcerated in German concentration camps (he had been arrested during the German occupation), she was recovering from tuberculosis. Elli had been told that she would never be able to have children, but, at their wedding, she was visibly pregnant.

Arianna was born in 1950, and her sister, Agapi, a classically trained actress and a motivational speaker, in 1952. When Arianna was eleven and Agapi was nine, their parents split up. (Family lore holds that the preteen Arianna encouraged her mother to leave, saying, "You're not happy, and you should be.") "My parents really loved each other," Agapi told me. "But it was the circumstances of him wanting to go out and have a girlfriend or two here and there, and that's what my mother couldn't tolerate." The Stassinopouloses never divorced, and the girls remained close to their father, whose fortunes in business fluctuated. "We would go to Corfu, and he would gamble," Agapi recalled. "He would give Arianna and me chips, and we would cash them in and make money, and play the little lottery machines."

After the separation, Elli and the two girls moved from Kifissia to Athens, where they lived in an apartment on Mourouzi Street, across from a fire station. (Huffington recalls in her book "On Becoming Fearless" that Elli once locked her pocketbook inside, and had firemen prop a ladder up to the window.) Elli, an autodidact who spoke four languages, fostered a warm, open environment. On Saturdays, a teacher instructed the family in yoga. Elli would stand on her head. "She was the nonconformist of the neighborhood," Huffington says. One of Elli's favorite sayings was "Your dowry is your education." Also: "Darling, let it marinate." And "Give yourself a hundred per cent to whatever you are doing." (The yoga stuck, but not the admonition against multitasking. Her favorite pose, Huffington told me, is trikonasana, "because you're doing three things at once.")

Arianna was a diligent child with an assertive streak—in a story she likes to tell, she chases the neighborhood kids, who are disturbing her reading, away from her own birthday party. She and Agapi would play "Swan Lake"; Arianna choreographed. Mostly, Arianna was a reader. "I just knew I would never be bored early on," she said. "It was, like, 'Oh, my God, there are all these books!'"

Arianna arrived in England, at the height of Carnaby Street, a mini-adult. She was indifferent to rock and roll. She never tried pot. As a debater, she was indefatigable, and in her final year at Cambridge she participated in a televised debate on feminism. Her evisceration of the Women's Liberation movement led to

"The Female Woman" (1973), in which she argued that men and women should be free to occupy equal—but distinct—roles. Huffington now speaks of the book as a harbinger of post-feminism, but it is more reactionary than she may care to remember. ("Women's Lib claims that the achievement of total liberation would transform the lives of all women for the better; the truth is that it would transform only the lives of women with strong lesbian tendencies.") In any case, it was a hit, furthering her career as a budding celebrity contrarian.

In 1971, Arianna appeared on the BBC classical-music quiz show "Face the Music." One of the other panelists was Bernard Levin, a columnist for the London *Times*. A lifelong bachelor, he was forty-two; she was twenty-one, and an admirer. (She clipped his columns from the paper, underlined them, and saved them in a special file.) By the end of the taping, according to Huffington, Levin had invited her to dinner. "All I remember is that I spent the week prepping, getting myself up to date on Northern Ireland, the latest developments in the Soviet Union, and the latest Wagner recordings," Huffington wrote later.

Her cramming paid off, and she continued to immerse herself in Levin's highly ritualized world: the theatre, opera, lobster, Wexford every year. "He used to say that going to bed with him was a liberal education," Huffington, who still refers to Levin as "the big love of my life," has said. Her writing from the era—her next book, "After Reason," was a byzantine polemic against "political salvationism"—reflects his libertarian politics and orotund style. "It was just like everything was so delicious about him," she told me.

The couple eventually embarked on a period of metaphysical inquiry that alienated some of their friends and colleagues as much as it entertained the press. Christopher Hitchens wrote, "Let the record show that in October 1979...Bernard Levin achieved the total state of self-absorption towards which he had been moving for so long. The venue was the Café Royal: amid incense and vaguely Oriental music, flanked by his companion, Levin rose and told a large invited audience how they could be 'changed,' by investing £150 in a 50-hour 'Insight training.'" (Insight was founded by the spiritual leader John-Roger, with whom Huffington has remained affiliated. Huffington denies that incense and Oriental music played a role in the event.) When Levin died, in 2004, his obituary in the *Times* noted that Huffington's "interest in mystic cults . . . was to lead him into one of the more embarrassing episodes of his journalism—his hyperbolic praise through a number of columns of the self-promoting guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh."

The relationship ended in 1980. Arianna, wanting children badly and armed with letters of introduction, moved to New York with her mother. They rented a town house on East Sixty-first Street, and soon were entertaining such luminaries as Dan Rather and Bill Paley, amid tables strewn with peaches and figs. Each morning, Arianna and Barbara Walters exercised together. *New York* declared in a story, "Arianna Stassinopoulos has become, in record time, a fixture in East Side social life, and without the advantages of wealth, a title, or conventional beauty."

In 1985, the philanthropist Ann Getty, whom Arianna had become close friends with, orchestrated a get-together at her mansion in San Francisco with Michael Huffington, a Texas oil scion with conservative connections (in 1968, he was a summer intern for the first-term congressman George H. W. Bush). After a few more transcontinental group dates—a visit to the billionaire John Kluge's farm in Virginia; a trip with Walters—Michael and Arianna became a serious couple. "I was most attracted to Arianna because of her intelligence and seductiveness," Michael told me in an e-mail. "I had never met a woman like her."

"The word that so many of my friends used about him was 'adorable,'" Huffington recalled, but the alliance left some people puzzled. "Michael is a very nice man, but he certainly didn't have Arianna's spirit," Walters told me. "He was very quiet, and hard to know, but, you know, nice, sweet."

The couple married in April of 1986 in a ninety-minute black-tie ceremony at St. Bartholomew's Church in Manhattan. The five hundred or so guests included Herreras, Kissingers, Rothermeres, and Buckleys. Ann Getty paid for the Huffingtons' post-ceremony dinner—caviar, veal Florentine, Dom Perignon—the bill for which was reported to be significantly higher than what she had anticipated. *Women's Wear Daily* devoted pages of coverage to the affair, noting that after the ceremony Huffington's mother, smoking a cigar, told a reporter, "Now that I've got Arianna married off, I can go back to Greece."

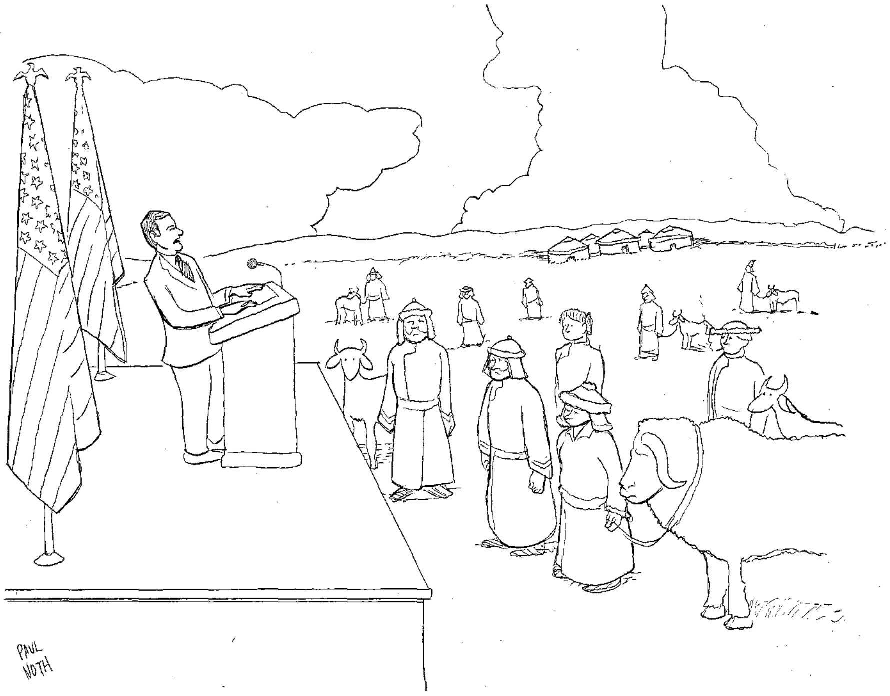
Hermes, the messenger, known for his protean gifts, is Huffington's favorite Greek god, but her sister likens her to Athena. "She has the work ethic—her work is joy—and she loves creating in a very excellent way," Agapi told me. "I remember her rehearsing, let's say for a speech or monologue. If she missed a word, she would say to Mom, 'Let's start again.' There was never a good-enough."

Athena is also the goddess of war, and, throughout her career, Huffington has demonstrated a gladiatorial appetite for verbal combat. Her assessments of Bill Frist, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, campaign finance, the drug war, the war in Iraq—even at a time when questioning the war against terrorism wasn't popular—have been unflinching. "AS ROME BURNS... MCCAIN CAMP TALKS LIPSTICK, PIGS, WOLVES, MOOSE, FISH, SNOW MOBILING AND SEX-ED FOR KINDERGARTNERS," the Huffington Post's front-page headline—the letters were the height of bullets—read in mid-September.

Following the outing of Valerie Plame as a C.I.A. operative, in 2003, one of the most frequent targets of Huffington's censure was the New York *Times* reporter Judith Miller. Her coverage was relentless, scathing, and prescient. "In this scenario," Huffington wrote on July 27, 2005, "Miller certainly wasn't an innocent writer caught up in the whirl of history. She had a starring role in it."

The posts, despite their ferocity, or perhaps because of it, reflected a Huffington hubris—the tendency to undercut her best argument by going over the top with it. "This is why Miller doesn't want to reveal her 'source' at the White House—because she was the source," Huffington wrote. I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, Miller later stated, was her source.

Huffington's willingness to resort to rhetoric to justify her fudges can be risible. "This isn't journalism; it's a Sag Harbor circle jerk," Huffington wrote in March, 2006, after *Vanity Fair* published



"As I travel around the country, I see more and more signs that it's probably the wrong one."

a story defending Miller. She chose to ignore the fact that, eight months earlier, she had substantiated her own criticisms by writing that she had heard them from people who knew Miller well, "since I spent the weekend in the vicinity of her summer hometown."

Huffington can take an imperious tone with those who attempt to pin her down on her inconsistencies. In 1988, the Huffingtons moved from Washington, D.C., where Michael had worked in the Reagan Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for negotiations policy, to Santa Barbara, where he ran, and won, a race to represent the Twenty-second District in Congress. In 1994, he unsuccessfully challenged Dianne Feinstein for her Senate seat. The race was contentious.

Nick Welsh, a longtime political writer with the Santa Barbara *Independent*, who has written critically about Huffington, recalls, "What she did with me was she found some guy in town we both knew, and we all had to go out to lunch and do this emotional show-and-tell bullshit, yadda yadda yadda." (Huffington denies having had a meal with Welsh.) Welsh continued to publish negative columns, including follow-up coverage of the bombshell that the Huffingtons employed an illegal-immigrant nanny, Marisela Garcia. Arianna then produced an affidavit, signed by Garcia's husband, saying that Welsh had offered him money and a green card in exchange for stories, which he denied.

Huffington can be seductive, but she is not always as good at following through in her relationships. Her political transformation has contributed to some of her estrangements: Elaine Chao was her daughter Isabella's original godmother, but the relationship became awkward for Huffington after Chao was appointed Secretary of Labor by President Bush, Huffington has written, "so I asked Isabella to pick another godmother among my girlfriends." (She chose Lynda Resnick.) Huffington says that from her Cambridge years "there's nobody I really stayed connected to." She attributes her lack of lifelong friendships to her closeness to her sister and her mother, who died in 2000, but admitted, "I metabolize experiences fast." As a heroic precedent, she invokes Charles de Gaulle, who, upon being told by an official that all the official's friends were opposed to his policies, replied, "*Changez vos amis.*" (Huffington, of course, has changed her friends *and* her ideology.) She told me, "It's, like, This happened, this didn't work, let's move on."

Her breakups and makeups are legion. One spat involved the political consultant Ed Rollins, who worked on Michael's 1994 Senate campaign. In 1996, Rollins published a memoir, in which he referred to Arianna as "the most ruthless, unscrupulous, and ambitious person I'd met in thirty years of national politics." The book asserted, among other things, that she had hired private detectives to track Maureen Orth, who was writing a piece about her for *Vanity Fair*. "I have never hired a private investigator," Huffington told me. "I just thought, Do I really want to spend the next year of my life suing Ed Rollins instead of letting life prove that he was wrong on so much about me?" She added that she had run into him the other day, "doing 'Anderson Cooper,'" and invited him to blog for the Huffington Post.

The conflict between Huffington and Orth has continued to fester. In her 1994 story, "Arianna's Virtual Candidate," Orth reported, among other things, that Michael had "hugged" two young male staffers, and that Arianna had never volunteered at an abused-children's charity that she claimed to support. (The story, which came out weeks before the election, was nominated for a National Magazine Award, though the Huffingtons dispute much of Orth's account. "I like people, and I often give them a hug," Michael Huffington said.) Orth also wrote that Arianna, while promoting her Christian values to the electorate, underplayed the extent of her involvement with John-Roger, the leader of the Church of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness, or M.S.I.A., calling him merely 'a friend.'" Huffington told me, "I was feeling very defensive. I was trying to explain something that I shouldn't have tried to explain. Because it was a different realm."

Orth was married to Tim Russert, whom Huffington repeatedly criticized, until his death, this summer, referring to him in a section of "Right Is Wrong" entitled "Russert Watch!"—also a recurring series on the Huffington Post—as "journalism's answer to the EZ Pass" and "the conventional wisdom zombie." Huffington says that the critique was purely professional. Jenny Tartikoff, a spokesperson for NBC News, declined to comment, as did Orth, but the political commentator James Carville, a friend of Russert's, asserted, "The view that Tim was an easy interviewer is unique to Arianna Huffington. It's a personal assessment."

Bob Woodward—"the dumb blonde of American journalism," who is "so awed by his proximity to power that he buys whatever he's being sold"—has been another recent target of Huffington's barbs. "It's a marketing technique, I guess," Woodward told me. William Kristol, the *Times* columnist, had a similarly dismissive response to a passage from "Right Is Wrong," in which Huffington repeats a cell-phone remark of Kristol's—" 'Precipitous withdrawal' really worked"—overheard on the 4 P.M. Acela from New York to Washington. She calls the remark "deluded triumphalist drivel." Kristol e-mailed me:

> I remember at the time thinking that she didn't even get the conversation right (Arianna's not used to furiously transcribing overheard conversations, I guess!)—but since I of course don't remember what I said and didn't take notes, I'd just prefer to leave it alone. I also remember her gotcha tone in her article for Huffington Post (haven't seen the book), which was amusing, since I knew she was there—we'd had a three-minute conversation of the how are you, what are your kids doing variety when we got on.

"I am 100% convinced that Arianna and I married because we were madly in love with each other," Michael Huffington e-mailed. "However, I don't think it hurt that she was beautiful and I was wealthy. But beauty and wealth alone would not have brought us together in matrimony."

Three years after the 1994 Senate race—Huffington ultimately conceded to Feinstein after a drawn-out recount, having spent almost thirty million dollars of his fortune and losing by under two per cent of the vote—the couple agreed to divorce. "Michael decided that he wanted to go off to Europe and go on a boat, and I wanted to pick up my life and continue writing," Huffington recalled. "He wanted to check out, and I had checked in."

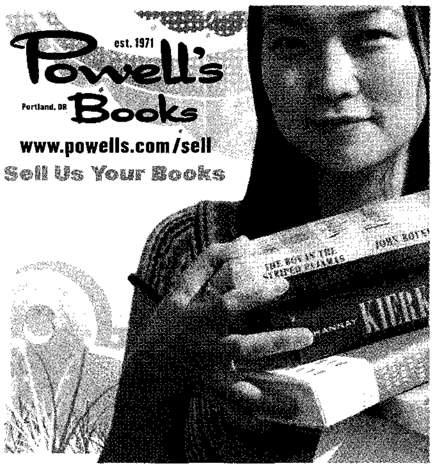
In 1998, Michael acknowledged, in an interview with *Esquire*, that he had had sexual experiences with men. When I asked Arianna whether she was aware of this when they married—in the past, she has said that she was not—she said that she and Michael now have an agreement not to discuss the issue. When I asked Michael, he replied, "In December, 1985, in my Houston town house I sat down with her and told her that I had dated women and men so that she would be aware of it. I didn't think it would be fair to her not to mention my bisexuality. . . . And the good news was that it was not an issue for her." Today, they are friends. On what would have been their twentieth anniversary, Michael—who has converted to the Eastern Orthodox Church and is a sometime film producer—sent Arianna a bouquet of yellow roses with a card that read, "We'll always be the parents of two remarkable young women."

Since the divorce, Arianna has lived with their daughters—Christina, nineteen, and Isabella, seventeen—and Agapi in Brentwood. The house is often described as a mansion, but its feel is closer to that of a storybook cottage. A green patina gate with fleur-de-lis spikes swings open onto the driveway, suggesting admittance into a secret garden. In front of a white brick house, snuggled in ivy, are a basketball hoop and the family Priuses (which Huffington's daughters refer to as the "Prii"). Inside, the pleasingly haphazard décor ranges from rococo and Victorian to Zen. Stuffed on a shelf along with a photograph of Christina and Senator Barbara Mikulski were candles, incense sticks, and a jar of vitamins.

Huffington, according to Agapi, "practically can't make tea," and, while she provides for her family, she is entirely dependent on it. With her daughters, she is as doting and demonstrative as her mother was with her. One day when Isabella was sick, she pulled her onto her lap, like a baby, and stroked her head. The day before, away in Seattle, she had made hamstery kissing noises over the phone and asked, "Are you going to sleep in Mommy's bed?"

"We do life together," Agapi told me. (The family also employs two housekeepers, including Garcia, who is now legal.) "We make the list, like we're a team. We're talking, 'Oh, honey, don't forget that we need to take the car to Toyota.' It's not, like, 'Oh, well, then you go do the shopping.' Sometimes she'll say to me, 'Can you just handle that, because I don't have time for that?'" When Arianna is not on the road, she and Agapi like to retreat to Arianna's bathroom together at the end of the day to take off their makeup.

The household operates with the loopy tribal chaos of a camp or a kibbutz. One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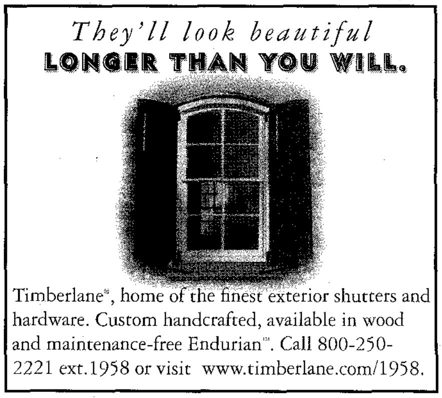
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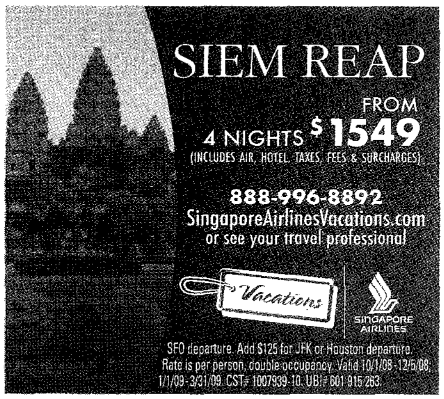
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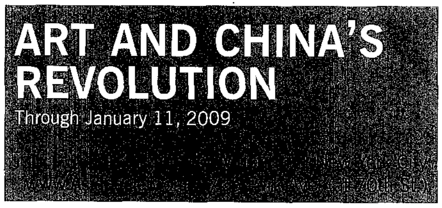
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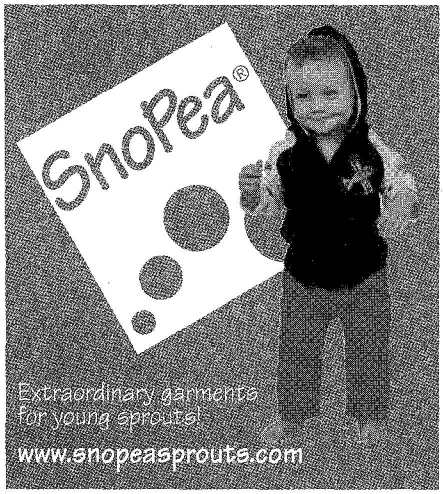
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day, one of the housekeepers needed seventy dollars, and so Arianna instructed her to look in her wallet.

Several minutes later, the housekeeper returned, to say that she hadn't found the wallet.

"Ask Agapi," Arianna said.

"She's doing her meditation," the housekeeper replied.

Visions, augurs, and instincts feature large in the cosmology of the Stassinopoulos sisters. Huffington's first pregnancy ended in stillbirth, a tragedy forecast by a recurring dream in which the eyes of the baby in her womb would not open. Shortly after Christina's birth, Huffington says, she underwent an out-of-body experience. "I had left it. I was looking down at myself, at Christina, at the tuberoses on the nightstand, at the entire room," she wrote in "The Fourth Instinct: The Call of the Soul," her millennialist paean to "at-one-ment." "For I don't know how long, I hovered in that state of almost intangible peace."

Perhaps the unifying strain of Huffington's thought, through the years, is anti-relativism. She is a joiner and a believer, never apathetic or a cynic. In her world view, agnosticism may be the greatest sin. "The technological changes that are still emerging in the nineties . . . will be trivial compared to changes brought about by men and women tapping into the wisdom that flows like a river through the deepest caverns of the human psyche," she wrote in "The Fourth Instinct." That may seem a strange prophecy coming from a future Internet mogul, but both her business and her spiritual impulses stem from a long-held conviction that great change is afoot in our age, and that she is destined to be a part of it. Through all her incarnations, Huffington's interest in mass movements, human potential, and the improvability of man has been as consistent as her suspicion of pharmacology, utilitarianism, and Skinner boxes. Her own life may be her greatest project.

In five decades of self-improvement, she has tried fire-walking, list-making, journal-keeping, mercury detoxification, homeopathy, chiropractic, infrared saunas, microdermabrasion, est, and—she writes in her 2006 book, "On Becoming Fearless"—"the Beverly Hills diet, the all-brown-rice diet, the grapefruit diet, the cabbage soup diet, the no carbs, no fat, indeed no calories diet." Her daily regimen includes yoga, meditation, and prayer. Since 1996, she has donated ten per cent of her income to charity. Her numinous prescriptions—in a recent blog post on Obama, she devoted five paragraphs to urging him to get more sleep—have occasionally opened her up to ridicule in the political sphere. "She's a flake and a poser and an attention-seeking diva," Mark Salter, a McCain aide, told the Washington *Post*, after the dinner-party controversy. I asked if the ad-feminem attack bothered her, and she replied, "If someone called you, say, a burglar, would you care?"

Over the years, Huffington has been touchier about her relationship with John-Roger, the baby-faced spiritual leader of M.S.I.A., who was born Roger Delano Hinkins in Rains, Utah, in 1934, and, in 1963, rechristened himself upon his emergence from a nine-day coma induced by kidney-stone surgery. In an investigation published in the Los Angeles *Times* in 1988, the reporters Bob Sipchen and David Johnston linked John-Roger—whose students believe that he has unique access to a power called Mystical Traveler Consciousness—to financial and sexual improprieties. (John-Roger stated, through a spokesman, that the allegations "remain as untrue today as when they were first published.") His views on the body are certainly unusual: In "Sex, Spirit & You," he writes, "When a woman has a history of blocking her creative flow and shutting off this area of expression by pushing the energy back down into the creative center, she may develop many problems related to her menstrual flow."

The relationship has, at times, made those around her uncomfortable. Barbara Walters recalled being introduced to John-Roger by Huffington in the eighties. "I did not take to him the same way that she had," Walters said. "That caused a pause in our relationship, and, I think, of some others."

Lately, Huffington seems less defensive about her relationship with John-Roger. The first day I spent with her, in San Francisco, she handed me an iPod, the contents of which included a guided meditation entitled "Innerphasing for Multidimensional Consciousness." I clicked on it. A voice intoned, "Let go of any restrictions or limitations that you've placed on yourself and let God fill the space where the restrictions or limitations were."

"This is the politics call, right?" Huffington said into a BlackBerry early one morning in San Francisco, from the back seat of a black town car. She had just dialled in to a phone conference with some of the Huffington Post's editors and reporters in New York and Washington. "Hi, Sam," she said, speaking to the political reporter Sam Stein. They discussed a story he was working on, about a Clinton donor. Apparently, the story was sensitive, and his sources' identities would have to be protected. "I have a feeling we're not going to be visiting you in jail," Huffington said. "Just remember Judy Miller. . . . Look how well it turned out for her. . . . Ha ha. . . . Are you allowed to blog from jail? You can write 'De Profundis,' like Oscar Wilde." As she talked, she checked another BlackBerry and daubed her cheeks with a powder puff. Addressing Nico Pitney, the site's national editor, she went on, "Oh, and you know what? We never did a Chuck Hagel interview. . . . And say hi from me!"

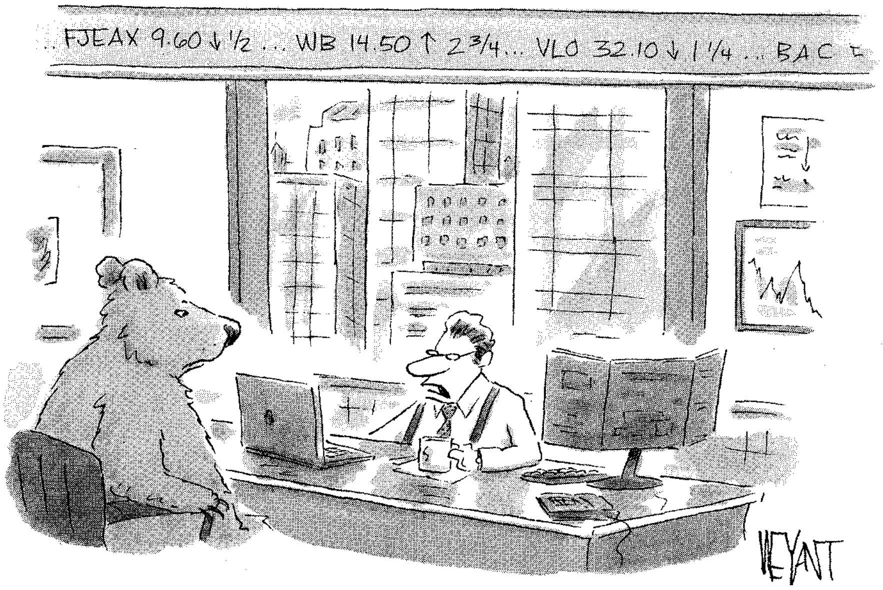
Hagel—the Nebraska Republican, who is friendly with Obama—is one of Huffington's current favorite politicians. Previously, she had been a sidekick of Newt Gingrich and an admirer of John McCain, with whom she travelled on the Straight Talk Express in 2000. Even as a conservative, Huffington supported abortion rights and gun control; her disillusionment with the Republican Party culminated in her helping to stage "shadow conventions" in 2000 alongside the Conventions of both parties. McCain, whom Huffington introduced as "the most prominent voice for reform within the political system" was a keynote speaker. (She now considers him a "Trojan horse"—"an older and crankier version of the man he couldn't stomach voting for in 2000," disguised as a maverick.) In 2004, she spoke in support of John Kerry, making her defection complete. Al Michaels, on Monday Night Football, once reportedly referred to a twenty-yard gain as showing "more change of direction than Arianna Huffington," but her political evolution has, she claims, hinged on a simple revelation: that the private sector was not sufficient to solve society's ills.

Huffington works from her Brentwood house—her office is a baronial space with a wood-beamed ceiling and stacks of books—as does the Los Angeles-based staff of the Huffington Post. The day I visited, she was cheerful and solicitous of the four staff members—assistants and associate blog editors—who were housed in a hidden office built into a second-floor nook, but there have been personnel problems. Since the Huffington Post launched, at least fifteen full-time, part-time, or contract employees have left the office. (An editor who had worked for Hunter S. Thompson for three years left after four months.) "What happened is that a lot of people who came to the office wanted to be writers," Huffington said. "It was frustrating for people when the jobs are administrative. I have a responsibility for not making that clear in the beginning." Because Huffington has employees sign a nondisclosure agreement, few of them were willing to speak on the record. I spoke to ten people who had worked in the Los Angeles office. Maegan Carberry characterized her tenure as a generally positive one, saying, "It was probably the most valuable professional experience I've had." (Carberry now blogs for the Huffington Post.)

Many others described Huffington as an erratic employer. Some of her demands sounded typical of a high-powered, if high-strung, boss—one story involves an employee being chided for affixing a document with a pink paper clip rather than a regular silver one. (Huffington says this never happened.) "When Arianna wanted to be charming, funny, nice, whatever, she was a great boss," Pete Keeley, who did some work for the Huffington Post in 2006, told me. "But then there were days where something was getting at her and there was nothing you could do right. One of the frustrating things was that she had absolutely no compunctions about saying, 'Hey, do this,' and then saying, 'Why did you do that? I never asked you to do that.' And you would say, 'Yes, you did.' And she would say, 'Why would I say that? That's ridiculous.' So you were constantly put in the position of either backing down or calling your boss a liar."

Admirers of Huffington often say the same things about her drive and her level of intensity as her detractors do. David Lack, who has known the family for years, told me, "Arianna will fight on, and she takes no prisoners. A lot of times, she has no conscience, either, about some of the damage she does behind her. She always goes on and figures it will fix itself by moving forward. And I give her credit. Only in America!"

Huffington's frame of reference is capacious: the day she mentioned Judy Miller in the same breath as Oscar Wilde, I also heard her hold forth credibly on "Hamlet," NAFTA, western Pakistan, and Apollo Creed. "I remember reading Ayn Rand in Greek and English and getting sent to the principal's office because my essays were reflecting an Ayn Randian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"Of all the markets, in all the world, you had to walk into mine."

philosophy," she told me one day, and the allusive nature of her considerable intelligence persists. Homework—lots of it—is at the heart of her approach to forming opinions and to arguing them. "Arianna wants to know everything," Roy Sekoff, the founding editor of the Huffington Post, said. "She has the greatest capacity to take in and immediately utilize information. I've literally seen her stand somewhere, look at a piece of research, and then—boom!—go on TV and, word for word, nail the three most important points and leave out everything else."

Her synthetic gifts have, at times in her career, raised questions. Her Maria Callas book prompted accusations of plagiarism from a previous biographer of Callas; the case was settled out of court. Lydia Gasman, now an emeritus art-history professor at the University of Virginia, says that Huffington's Picasso biography included themes similar to those in her unpublished four-volume Ph.D. thesis. "What she did was steal twenty years of my work," Gasman told Maureen Orth in 1994. Gasman did not file suit. (Huffington denied both allegations.)

In 2006, the Huffington Post ran a piece, with the byline George Clooney, about freedom of speech. Clooney issued a statement saying that he had not written it. (Huffington, it emerged, had collated a number of Clooney's public statements, fashioned them into a blog entry, and e-mailed them to a movie publicist for approval, which she had apparently not been entitled to give.) Under pressure from journalism watchdogs, and her own bloggers, who felt that such cut-and-paste tactics diminished their work, Huffington published a mea culpa, entitled "Lessons Learned," in which she presented the Clooney affair as a one-time slip-up. Ten months earlier, a reporter from U.S.C. Annenberg's *Online Journalism Review* had asked, "Will there be ghost writers or assistants who might write for some of the group bloggers?" "That will never happen," Huffington had replied.

Huffington weathers skepticism about her personal life with ease, but her professional setbacks, particularly the 2003 California gubernatorial race, have exacted a toll. Huffington had been in Ireland on vacation with Tina Brown for forty-eight hours—"debating with her kids and mine whether to explore the teashops of Bunratty or the rainswept cliffs of Ballycotton," Brown wrote—when she returned to L.A. to enter the race. Through an oddity of state electoral law, the Democratic governor, Gray Davis, had become the subject of an unprecedented recall election. Huffington took the position that Davis should be thrown out of office, joining a weirdo menagerie of candidates who included Mary Carey, a porn actress, and the former child star Gary Coleman.

According to Michael Huffington, both he and Arianna had expressed interest in running, but, at the urging of their children, they made a deal that neither would enter the race. "Yes, we had both agreed not to run for governor," he wrote. "But she clearly changed her mind, and that was her prerogative." Michael told CNN that their children, upset at her decision to run, temporarily moved out of the house (Arianna says this is inaccurate), and he endorsed Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Huffington's campaign, from the start, was troubled: she arrived at City Hall to file her papers at the same time as Schwarzenegger, hoping to piggyback on his publicity; she ended up, to much comment, knocking over a bank of microphones intended for him. As her chances dimmed further, she formed a last-ditch progressive partnership with the Green Party politician Peter Camejo. Toward the end of September, after it was disclosed that she had paid only a total of seven hundred and seventy-one dollars in taxes for the previous two years, she dropped out of the race. (Huffington said that the bulk of her income was child-support payments.) Camejo, who died last month, recalled that she "then reversed her position, pulled out of the election, and began riding around with Davis on his airplane." He continued, "My experience with her was that her ego plays a big role in her life, and her commitment to her political principles seems to vary depending on what wind is blowing and whatever might benefit her in the short term."

During the race, Susan Estrich had published a cruel column portraying Arianna as a bad mother, prompting Huffington to comment, on a blog she had started for the campaign, on the reasons that women seem "unable to break the 'glass ceiling' in business and politics." She continued, "Maybe it's because every time they try to assert some power, the male-dominated political culture tries to cut them down." It was a rare vulnerable moment for

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Huffington, who, through her career, has been admirably unhindered by her gender, or by worries about a conspiracy against it. She told me, "I had not really until that race felt that women, now in the twenty-first century, still needed role models."

When the Huffington Post launched, on May 9, 2005, some commentators saw another quixotic Huffington whim. "Her blog is such a bomb that it's the movie equivalent of 'Gigli,' 'Ishtar,' and 'Heaven's Gate' rolled into one," Nikki Finke wrote, in *LA Weekly*. Even Huffington may not have been confident that the site would prosper. She did not invest her own money in the launch. "Friends immediately offered to put up the money, and I felt I was putting in my sweat equity," she told me.

The site has been a triumph. Since the launch, Huffington and Lerer have raised eleven million dollars. This year, they began to hire reporters and started a local bureau in Chicago; at the Democratic National Convention, they set up a lounge, providing free yoga lessons and facials to conventioneers. (And, presumably, to potential buyers. A recent *Times* article cited a sale-price estimate of the company at two hundred million dollars, though Huffington says that there are no immediate plans to sell.)

Many of her intimates say that she has seemed more at ease since emerging from the humiliation of the governor's race to build a thriving business. "I think she's much more comfortable in the world, whereas before she felt like she had to protect herself," Agapi said. "I think she has shed a lot of layers." She continued, "Even when I see her on TV, I think she's much softer. Why? She doesn't have to prove herself anymore in any way." Tom Freston spoke of a new Arianna piety among the sort of bigwig male moguls who once regarded her as a lightweight—"They're fascinated with her. They respect her for building a business out of nothing but her wits and determination"—while Christopher Hitchens invoked a butterfly: "I think this is the last chrysalis, the last pupation." Michael Huffington said, "Arianna has definitely changed since she launched the Huffington Post. She is calmer, happier, and has clearly hit her stride in something in which she excels and enjoys."

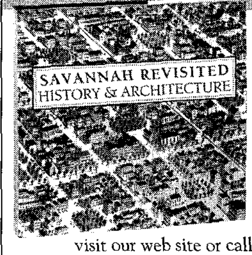
The days I spent with Huffington were marked by the fluidity of a person who loves what she does: there wasn't much of a set agenda for her work on the site, but she was never *not* working on it, either. Huffington runs hard, and she can be a lot of fun. (I recall her in the ladies' room after a radio show happily jabbering from a bathroom stall.) In San Francisco, when she popped into a Starbucks for her third latte of the day, it seemed hard to believe that the young fogey who once condemned the Gap, "a popular clothing chain catering to and defining the tastes of teenagers," and rap music had become the go-with-the-flow populist who greeted every driver and barista—"What's your name?" "Arianna!"—and, late that night, schlepped her rolling bag through the airport, hair mussed up and pulled into a banana clip.

Huffington's decisions in life, contradictory as many of them have been, seem to have in common the conviction that the worst imaginable fate would be to have people not pay attention to her at all. In the face of turmoil, there's a willful nonreactivity about her, a refusal—perhaps strengthened by her many years of mind exercises—to be deterred. As we were riding around Los Angeles one day, she began to talk about her mother: "She would cook a lot of Russian dishes, like *blinchiki*, which were crêpes with minced meat and vegetables, or artichokes with this great sauce, and there would always be some amazing lunch. We would go to school, and she would sit there—"

Huffington's face crumpled into a grimace. As tears streamed down her cheeks, she continued to modulate her tone, as if she had been injected with some sort of emotional Botox, causing her mind to lag behind her body in its ability to express genuine feeling, rather than the other way around. "She was such a devoted mother," Huffington said, taking concentrated breaths. "It's hard to imagine how she was like—she was so full of love and it was like her whole life centered around us but without any of the dark things that people would imagine going with it. I just didn't realize what a gift it was to grow up like that."

Within seconds, she had pulled herself together. Shoulders back, chin up. I asked if she had considered writing an autobiography. She shook her head and replied, "Don't you think that's a sign that you are done?" ♦

BOOKS ABOUT THE SOUTH



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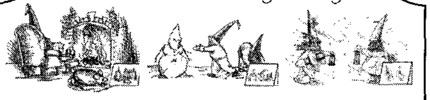

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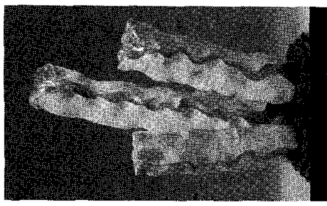

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

SET IN STONE

Abraham Lincoln and the politics of memory.

BY THOMAS MALLON

At the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C., on May 30, 1922, remarks by Robert Moton, the principal of the Tuskegee Institute, received special attention from the "colored" section of the audience. The federal commission responsible for the memorial's construction were loath to have Moton participate at all, let alone emphasize how Lincoln had given "freedom to a race and vindicated the honor of a Nation conceived in liberty." The commissioners preferred to concentrate on Lincoln as the Savior of the Union, rather than as its Great Emancipator.

William Howard Taft, the Chief Justice and former President, who headed the memorial commission, spoke of sectional reunion and "the restoration of . . . brotherly love" between North and South, as if the two were now morally equivalent entities in a long-ago blue-and-gray pageant. One foray by Taft into the hypothetical went beyond standard historical supposition and amounted to an apology to the nation's white Southerners: had Lincoln not been killed, Taft declared, "the consequences of the war would not have been as hard for them to bear, the wounds would have been more easily healed, the trying days of reconstruction would have been softened."

Taft presented the memorial to Warren Harding, the sitting President, and both Republicans took proprietary pleasure in the presence at the ceremony of Lincoln's only surviving child, the seventy-eight-year-old Robert Todd Lincoln. Robert had spent his early life seeking, and never truly winning, his father's approval; after his father's murder, six decades of mass sympathy and deference left him equally unsatisfied. He knew that he would never have been made Secretary of War or Ambassador to Great Britain without the Lincoln name, and his weird accidental presence at the assassinations of Garfield and McKinley, in 1881 and 1901, must have seemed a fateful punishment for refusing his father's invitation to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865. That night, Robert stayed home to study Spanish, just as he had chosen to remain upstairs in the White House the day his parents took lowbrow delight in an East Room reception for the newly wed Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb.

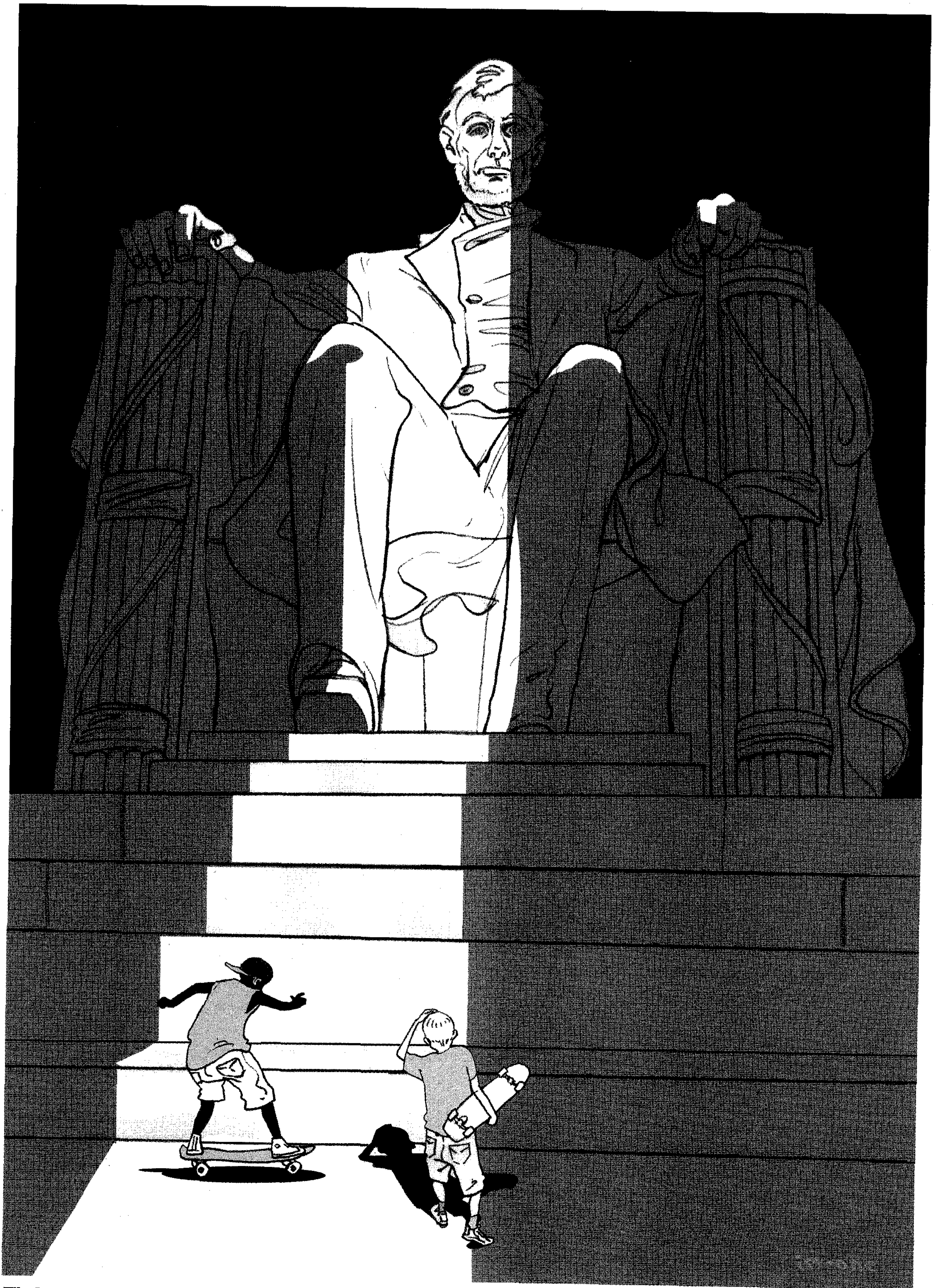
After the assassination, Robert was left to regulate the grief-driven hysterics of his mother and the swift mythologizing of his father, a man who had thought him no more than "very well, considering." He pursued both tasks with rigor, committing Mary Lincoln to an insane asylum in 1875 and strictly limiting historians' access to Abraham Lincoln's papers, whose shipment back to Illinois he was arranging even before the capture of John Wilkes Booth. Over the course of a half century, Robert fastidiously sought to prove his father's legitimate birth against contrary suggestions; protested the commercialization of Lincoln's Springfield home by the relic-collecting Osborn Oldroyd; rejected the log cabin as a symbol of "degradation and uncleanliness"; and helped prevent George Barnard's statue of a scruffy-looking Lincoln from being displayed in London.

Between 1898 and 1911, again because of the Lincoln name, Robert served as president of the Pullman Company, the biggest employer of African-Americans in the United States. But he was hardly a progressive force, going so far as to refuse a meeting that Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois sought in order to discuss bias in the company's policies. In the spring of 1922, as he sat on the platform before the segregated audience, Lincoln's son felt satisfied with both the new memorial's grandeur and the way its architecture set in stone the secondary nature of Lincoln's racial revolution. Like the structure's thirty-six columns (the number of states, including those of the Confederacy, in 1865), the inscription above a statue by Daniel Chester French and the engravings of the Second Inaugural Address and the Gettysburg Address all emphasize the reconnection of North and South. The massive seated Lincoln is even made from Georgia marble. One painted mural above the Gettysburg Address shows the Angel of Truth unshackling a slave, but it is scarcely noticed by most visitors.

The memorial's designers were at odds with the man they were enshrining. For all his mystical, even bloody-minded, devotion to the Union's preservation, Lincoln, the reluctant and strategic abolitionist, came to understand emancipation as his chief claim to immortality. A mental breakdown, in 1841, witnessed by his friend Joshua Speed, might have ended in suicide but for Lincoln's realization, confided to Speed at the time, that if he were to die now he "had done nothing to make any human being remember that he had lived." When Speed visited the White House in 1863, Lincoln went out of his way to recall this confidence and to declare, "with earnest emphasis," according to his reliable friend, that the Emancipation Proclamation had fulfilled his long-ago self-willed resurrection from depression.

It is Lincoln the liberator, not the conqueror or conciliator, that has turned the memorial into anything but the stately place envisioned by its planners. The memorial has been the most volatile symbolic

ABOVE: MARISCAL; OPPOSITE: ISTVAN BANYAI



The Lincoln Memorial, dedicated in 1922, aimed to enshrine the man who saved the Union, not the man who freed the slaves.

locale in Washington, the only one that will do as a backdrop for sea-changing dissent. Marian Anderson's 1939 concert and Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s 1963 speech would have lost considerable voltage had they been carried out beneath, say, the blandly indifferent obelisk honoring George Washington. Filmmakers and writers from Frank Capra to Philip Roth have sent their characters to the memorial at crucial moments, and it was to the memorial's steps that Richard Nixon travelled in the middle of the night, thinking that he might find a way of connecting with Vietnam protesters who had already connected with Lincoln. The temple dedicated by Taft and Harding is not a foursquare symbol of unity; it is the seat of every American government in exile.

ECLOGUE

In Juno Beach, on Pelican Lake,
Joseph Saul ate potato chips off a paper plate
and fed the broken bits to a duck.
He was accompanied by Laurie McGraw,

whom he met at the Alzheimer's Support Group—
she had been a caregiver, he had a diagnosis,
and together their eyes vacantly connected.
Laurie spelled her name with a large dot

or a star atop the "i." A born-again,
with two failed marriages so far,
she sent Joseph pamphlets in the mail
about Jews who could be saved by Christ.

On her day off, she washed her blind dog
with soap. The two discussed the pleasure
of naps. The duck strutted in uniformed plume,
greasy black-green, speckled red pate,

sated, companioned, unbundling with poop,
the duck thrust with the thrust of youth;
interior decorator of the lake, the duck
was flush with floor maps. Joseph oversaw

the duck's scufflings as Laurie made a note
to arrange another semidetached date.

—*Spencer Reece*

Robert Lincoln is the unhappy central presence in "Looking for Lincoln: The Making of an American Icon" (Knopf; $50), a highly particularized inquiry that travels from the weekend of the President's assassination past the dedication of his memorial. The book's authors—Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., members of a family involved in Lincoln collecting and scholarship for five generations—proceed here along two chronological tracks, examining the progress of Lincoln biography and the corresponding betrayal of Lincoln's moral legacy. Among the nearly fifteen thousand books published on Lincoln since his death, this one, which will appear next month, is an oddly magnificent downer, lavish and pictorial, but more wince-inducing than anything else, covering a post-Reconstruction era that prompted Frederick Douglass to pronounce emancipation, in its actual practice, "a stupendous fraud" against Southern blacks and Lincoln himself.

Lincoln's name was invoked by each side of nearly every national debate in the half century after his death, beginning with the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson, the hapless successor who continued to carry Lincoln's anointment amid dark whisperings, taken seriously by Mary, that he had also been part of the conspiracy to shed Lincoln's blood. Less than a decade later, as Grant's corrupt Presidency oozed into its second term, *Harper's Weekly* marvelled, "How strong is [Lincoln's] hold on the American people. Everybody feels that he understands him and has property in him."

The property's value seemed ever-increasing and transferrable. The Cold Water men of the temperance movement claimed that Lincoln had taken the pledge; the opposing Wets produced the liquor license that he had applied for as a storekeeper in New Salem, Illinois. President William McKinley publicly argued in October, 1898, that freeing Cuba from Spain was an effort comparable to the emancipation of the slaves, even as the Spanish-American War was chiefly celebrated as one more triumph of reunion, with Southern soldiers donning the blue uniform their fathers had shot at. Theodore Roosevelt, who as a boy had watched Lincoln's New York funeral procession, pronounced the sixteenth President a "tempered radical" who would have embraced the progressive reforms of the Square Deal. While employing Lincoln's secretary John Hay as his own Secretary of State, Roosevelt wore a ring with a lock of Lincoln's hair inside, and insisted he'd had multiple sightings of Lincoln's ghost in the halls and rooms of the White House.

As the Kunhardts make clear, the more Lincoln's presumed approval became the political gold standard the worse race relations in America got. In 1908, a year before the centennial of Lincoln's birth, a black bootmaker he had known named William Donnegan was lynched in the course of an especially grisly race riot in Springfield, Illinois. No blacks were invited to attend the town's birthday-dinner celebration the following year. During the centennial, Woodrow Wilson, soon to become the nation's first Southern President since Reconstruction, described the characters of Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee as equally sterling. In his first term, Wilson ordered the Treasury Department to segregate its employee

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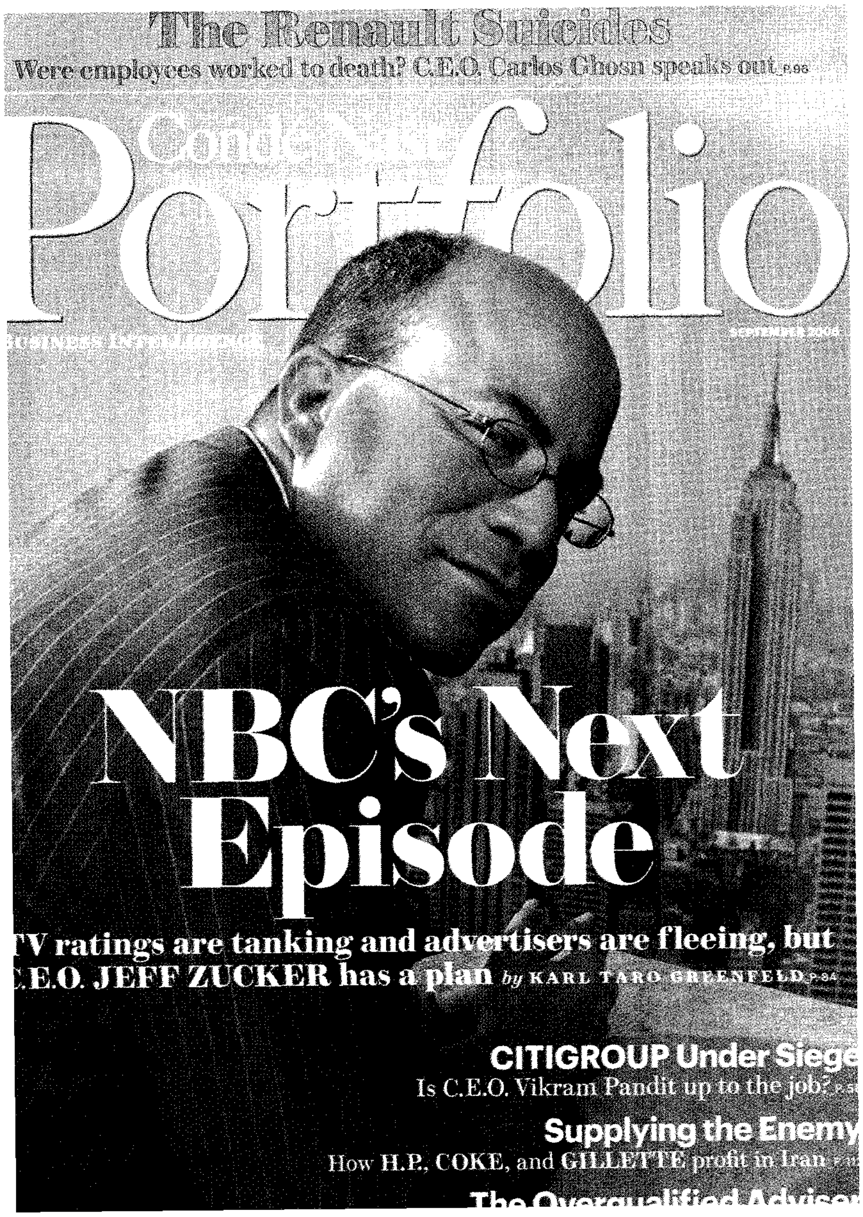

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USINESS INTELLIGENCE

SEPTEMBER 2008

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The Overqualified Advise

bathrooms and chose the Klan-hymning "Birth of a Nation" to be the first movie ever screened at the White House. His Administration later used Lincoln's image to sell the Liberty Bonds that financed a war on behalf of global democracy. Out of office and still suffering the effects of the stroke he had had during his second term, Wilson did not attend the dedication of the memorial in 1922, an altogether less democratic ceremony than the one in which the Freedmen's Memorial—a statue of Lincoln urging a kneeling slave to stand—had been dedicated, near the Capitol, in 1876.

What the authors call the "safeguarding" of Lincoln's emancipation legacy fell to African-Americans themselves. If any figure rivals Robert for centrality in "Looking for Lincoln," it is Frederick Douglass, who until his death, in 1895, continued to tell the story of how Lincoln had sought his reaction to the Second Inaugural Address during a White House reception from which policemen had tried to hustle him away. More significant, Douglass offered active rhetorical resistance to the chess-set version of the Civil War that was becoming ever more favored by sentimentalists and reënactors. "There was a right side and a wrong side," Douglass insisted, a plain truth that could not be smothered by placing flowers "alike and lovingly, on rebel and on loyal graves."

The authors draw attention to W. E. B. Du Bois as Douglass's even more aggressive heir, but they don't seem fully to recognize the way in which Du Bois's controversial assessment of Lincoln in 1922 is a kind of linchpin for their own enterprise: "I revere him the more because up out of his contradictions and inconsistencies he fought his way to the pinnacle of earth," Du Bois wrote. "I care more for Lincoln's great toe than for the whole body of the perfect George Washington, of spotless ancestry, who 'never told a lie' and never did anything else interesting." Du Bois grasped the instinctive appeal of Lincoln's wounded interior, entry to which seemed visible in the crags of his much photographed face. If Andrew Jackson was the first President with a personality, one that was recognizable to the electorate of his own day, Lincoln can be considered the first with a psychology, a delicate mental makeup that suggested itself to anyone who saw his picture in a newspaper, let alone heard him on a platform. (His sometimes high, even squeaky, voice is the one physical attribute our modern imagination still wants to deny.) Jackson may have been ready to fight any number of duels defending his wife's honor, but, in the long run, how much more compelling is Lincoln's patient handling of *his* wife's mental fluctuations.

"It is a great relief to get away from Washington and the politicians," Lincoln told his journalist friend Noah Brooks while reviewing troops before the battle of Chancellorsville, in May of 1863. "But nothing touches the tired spot." It's this elusive place that the student of Lincoln is always seeking to reach, attempting to understand and even somehow minister to it. The effort seems, even now, condoned and encouraged by Lincoln, who willingly sat for an array of painters and sculptors and photographers before and during his time in the White House. He is said to have remarked that Mathew Brady's 1860 picture, taken at the time of the Cooper Union speech, had helped make him President. His steady coöperation with visual artists sprang from the same immortal longings he had once expressed to Joshua Speed.

The authors' six-decade time line occasionally turns into a necrological grind. Along with the appearance of every major book, they note the passing of each Lincoln intimate and associate, whether it's William Florville, Lincoln's Springfield barber, in 1868, or, five years later, Salmon P. Chase, "the sixth of Lincoln's thirteen cabinet members to join him in death." The prose in "Looking for Lincoln" often has this kind of pedantic fortissimo, but the sustained raking and display of anecdotes and artifacts—an effort that feels almost archeological—has a peculiar cumulative force. As we witness the suppression of Lincoln's largest political meaning, we watch, on alternating pages, the gradual reassembly of him as a creature.

The first significant Lincoln biographies were memoirs, amalgamations of research and reminiscence produced by, among others, his law partner, William Herndon, and his

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secretaries John Hay and John Nicolay. In lectures about his work in progress, Herndon mixed in crowd-pleasing half-truths—an early tragic romance with Ann Rutledge seemed to explain so much of Lincoln's evident sorrow—but he also gathered up an enormous amount of recollection (not all of it reliable) that would otherwise have perished with Lincoln's earliest Illinois acquaintances. Judge David Davis, for instance, gave Herndon evidence of an impersonal magnetism that makes Lincoln sound oddly like Franklin Roosevelt or Ronald Reagan, decidedly remote for all the apparent warmth: "His Stories—jokes &c. which were done to whistle off sadness are no evidences of sociality. . . . His was a peculiar nature . . . no Strong Emotional feelings for any person—Mankind or thing." Herndon himself recalled that "the whole man—body & mind worked slowly—creekingly, as if it wanted oiling."

Beset with financial problems, as well as competition and counterattack from Lincoln loyalists and family, Herndon did not get his book out until 1889, and then only with the aid of a ghostwriter who at the last insisted on credit. In the interim, Hay and Nicolay serialized their dry and overlong opus, eventually dedicated to Robert; and Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's lawyer-confidant and bodyguard—who had bought up Herndon's research—surprised the public with a biography so unflattering that it was well reviewed in the South. But in the end victory was Herndon's: "No biography of Lincoln did more to shape how Americans came to see him," the Kunhardts accurately argue.

The American craving for Lincoln soon led to the use of his likeness and name to sell life insurance, cholera remedies, and lead ("By Its Purity & Excellent Qualities This Lead Deserves The Name Bestowed Upon It"). Children began playing with Lincoln Logs, invented by Frank Lloyd Wright's son, and, in a telling trivialization, during the 1909 centennial the Waterman Company's new no-dip Lincoln Fountain Pen guaranteed "the emancipation of millions of slaves to the ink bottle." If the likeness of any other President had been chosen for the penny, another token of the centennial, it seems probable that that annoying denomination would have been abolished by now.

Authentic Lincoln relics acquired ever-greater imaginative and monetary power. On Election Night in 1876, robbers attempting to make off with Lincoln's body were thwarted inside his tomb. In 1901, at Robert's strenuous urging, the remains were reburied under concrete. Visitors to the Springfield home and to the Petersen House, where Lincoln died, across the street from Ford's Theatre, felt the temptation to nick bits of furniture and wallpaper. The contents of the President's pockets on the night of the assassination—favorable press clippings, eyeglasses repaired with string—came to repose in a container made for them at the Library of Congress; the blood-soaked pillow on which Lincoln died, displayed at the Petersen House into the nineteen-nineties, has since been taken away for conservation.

The assassination, perpetrated on Good Friday, took on religious dimensions within forty-eight hours, when Easter Sunday sermons made explicit parallels to the Crucifixion. Even before that, the authors tell us, Lincoln may have become "the first non-Jew over whom Kaddish prayers were chanted in the synagogue." Before long, the survivors and biographers were warring over the degree to which Lincoln himself had, or had not, been a believer. Mary Lincoln came to insist that he was; Herndon felt certain of the opposite, and the son of Lincoln's friend Samuel Hill went so far as to claim that his father had burned a short, politically inexpedient book in which the young Lincoln had questioned the authority of the Bible and the existence of a hereafter. Even so, Frederick Douglass saw both saintliness and prophecy in Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, Lincoln's florid opposite, was given to ask himself—in something like the current, braceleted evangelical way—"what Lincoln would have done."

Hay, who worked for both Presidents, wrote that Lincoln had moved "in a flash of blinding light . . . full panoplied into the religion of the people." The process was slower than that, a gradual and disorderly canonization, furthered by the biographers' presentation of a hundred little mercies and miracles performed by Lincoln. All of them eventually made his earthly existence seem, even to Southerners, less a life than an incarnation. As the memorial itself took on an unexpected vitality, Lincoln became fully and mystically available to the citizenry, a figure beyond ownership by any faction.

In the nineteen-twenties, despite the crush of Republicans on the speakers' platform at the memorial, Lincoln was slipping from the grasp of the party he had helped to establish. New Dealers, thirties radicals (the Abraham Lincoln Brigade), and marchers in the postwar civil-rights movement all soon had their time with him, but while specific moments of counterintuitive convenience have permitted, say, Reagan to appropriate Franklin Roosevelt—or even Bill Clinton to praise Reagan—Lincoln now presides over the Republic inside such a diffuse and deified glow that political invocations of him usually feel meaningless. Even as Americans annex the memorial to big causes, they seem mostly to need Lincoln—and respond to him—in a psychological and spiritual way. If we are indeed a Christian nation, he is the Christ, and politicians risk looking silly when they mention him in connection with their little quadrennial concerns.

In 1909, the Reverend L. H. Magee, the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Springfield, Illinois, voiced his disgust at the exclusion of blacks from the town's centennial dinner, but he imagined that by the time of the bicentennial, in 2009, racial prejudice would be "relegated to the dark days of 'Salem witchcraft.' " Next year's Lincoln commemorations in Washington will include the reopening of Ford's Theatre, restored for performances for the second time since 1893, when its interior collapsed, killing twenty-two people. Congress will convene in a joint session on February 12th, and on May 30th the still new President will rededicate the Lincoln Memorial. The look and the emphasis of the occasion will have changed—measurably, for certain; astoundingly, perhaps—in the fourscore and seven years since 1922. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Snowball, *by Alice Schroeder (Bantam; $35).* This authorized biography of Warren Buffett, based on thousands of hours of interviews, appears just a week after Buffett took a decisive role in the current financial crisis, investing some five billion dollars in Goldman Sachs—a deal that conforms to his maxim "Be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful." Schroeder, a former investment analyst, is well equipped to elucidate Buffett's deals, but, inevitably, the legend of his personality supervenes, and Schroeder, stressing Buffett's relationship with his unloving mother, falls back on predictable psychology. Buffett's life abounds in good stories—a spell of teen-age shoplifting, an unusual marital arrangement, attempts to offer his children financial incentives to lose weight—but it's sometimes hard to avoid the impression that his idiosyncrasies obscure what he's really up to. Ultimately, the book lacks both the revelations that even a cautious autobiography sometimes betrays and the sustained scrutiny of an independent account.

Capitol Men, *by Philip Dray (Houghton Mifflin; $30).* During Reconstruction, sixteen black men served as congressmen. They have been scorned as bumbling, corrupt, or ineffectual—former field hands in shiny suits—and even the growing recognition, in recent years, of the shamefulness of the North's abandonment of Reconstruction has not entirely effaced that caricature. Dray's book should do so. He tells the stories of Robert Smalls, who commandeered a Confederate ship and his own freedom; P. B. S. Pinchback, the consummate Louisiana risk-taker; and Robert Brown Elliott, who faced down the intellectual architect of the Confederacy on the floor of Congress, dazzling and shaming his listeners. The congressmen were brought down—Elliott died, impoverished, in a rented room; another ended up as a street-cleaner—not by their flaws but by the systematic denial of the franchise in the South. As a journalist wrote at the time, "It is not Negro ignorance but Negro intelligence that is being feared."

Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State, *by Andrew Gelman (Princeton; $27.95).* Attempting to explain "why Americans vote the way they do," Gelman and a group of fellow political scientists crunch numbers and draw graphs, arriving at a picture that refutes the influential one drawn by Thomas Frank, in "What's the Matter with Kansas?," of poor red-staters voting Republican against their economic interests. Instead, Gelman persuasively argues, the poor in both red states and blue still mostly vote Democratic, and the rich, nationally speaking, overwhelmingly vote Republican. Meanwhile, voting patterns tally more closely with income in poor states than in rich ones. Of the popular image of affluent, urban, latte-drinking Democrats, Gelman pointedly notes that the demographic is most common in "precisely those states where national journalists are likely to live."

The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition, *by Thomas P. Slaughter (Hill & Wang; $30).* The journal of the Quaker mystic and abolitionist John Woolman has never been out of print since 1774, when it was first published. Along with Woolman's pamphlets and speeches, the journal was instrumental in persuading the Society of Friends to give up owning slaves. In this meditative biography, Slaughter provides sensitive readings of Woolman's writings in order to draw a picture of a "prophetic Old Testament radical" who practiced a patient and methodical mode of activism. Woolman balanced a workman's life in New Jersey with visits to Indian tribes and to Friends' meetings in other states, preaching a doctrine of asceticism and human perfectibility. His staunchest acts of protest, which he performed politely, were refusing to pay war taxes during the French and Indian War and compensating other Quakers' slaves for their work.

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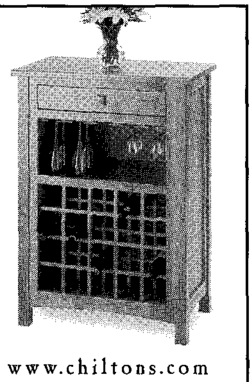
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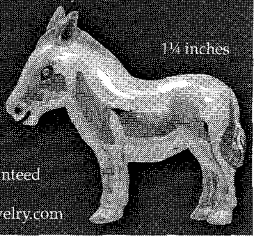
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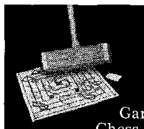
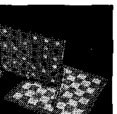
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MUSICAL EVENTS

SUPERSONIC

Stockhausen's "Gruppen," at Tempelhof Airport, in Berlin.

BY ALEX ROSS

Stockhausen's music communicates an almost childlike joy in the possibilities of sound.

For a few years in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, Karlheinz Stockhausen, the German avant-garde composer, nearly achieved the status of a pop icon. Each new piece of his attracted crowds of critics, struggling to convey the latest cosmic splatter of pointillistically variegated sounds. A lavish recording usually followed on the Deutsche Grammophon label. His lectures, mesmerizing in their mixture of scientific detail and visionary speculation, drew composers, professors, misfits, and rock stars. In 1967, the Beatles included his face on the cover of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," having already echoed his space-age bleeps in "Tomorrow Never Knows." Hippies began showing up at Stockhausen's concerts, which themselves assumed a psychedelic aura, the composer meditating onstage before the music began. In 1971, he visited the New York Philharmonic to present his electronic-instrumental work "Hymnen," a frenzied collage of national anthems. The *Times*, calling Stockhausen a "Pied Piper of the Young," reported, "Instead of the elderly clientele who dote on their Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky, there was long hair, there were miniskirts and hot pants, there were bearded boys in sweaters and denims, there was even a suspicious odor that sort of resembled tobacco."

Then came what seemed an irreversible decline. Every year, people talked about Stockhausen a little less. The New Age drift of his life style and philosophy—he lived with two female companions and claimed to have emanated from the star Sirius—eroded his intellectual reputation, while the minimalists replaced him as beacons for youth. From 1977 until the first years of the present decade, Stockhausen sank his energies into a series of seven operas named after days of the week, the entire cycle entitled "Licht." La Scala staged the first three installments in the eighties, but interest dwindled, and the final parts, "Wednesday" and "Sunday," have yet to be played in full. The low point arrived on September 16, 2001, when, at a press conference in Hamburg, Stockhausen fell to pondering the destruction of the World Trade Center, and, invoking the mythology of his opera cycle, described it as a Luciferian masterpiece. The general feeling was that he had gone off the deep end, and that his music no longer mattered. The last time I saw him in performance, in Berlin in 2002, he seemed a diminished figure, prosaically outfitted in white slacks and an old orange sweater. Yet there was something moving in his determination to keep on working. And there were always large, diverse crowds.

Stockhausen died in December of last year, at the age of seventy-nine. If anyone expected his music to die with him, the opposite has happened: suddenly, he seems to be receiving more performances than ever. In Europe, the Holland Festival, the Proms, and the Warsaw Autumn have all honored Stockhausen in what would have been his eightieth year, and in November retrospectives will take place at London's Southbank Centre and Paris's Festival d'Automne. In this country, by contrast, activity has been minimal; one of very few events in recent months was an all-Stockhausen concert at the ART-Saha! festival in Omaha, Nebraska, where the composer's final electronic work—an abstract, engulfing blur called "Cosmic Pulses"—had its American première. (Non-Nebraskans were able to watch the concert on the Internet.) Perhaps the lack of attention has to do with lingering unease over that World Trade Center comment, although, now that 9/11 has been exploited and trivialized in every conceivable way, the cryptic musings of an elderly German composer hardly seem worthy of notice. Within a few years, I suspect, ar-

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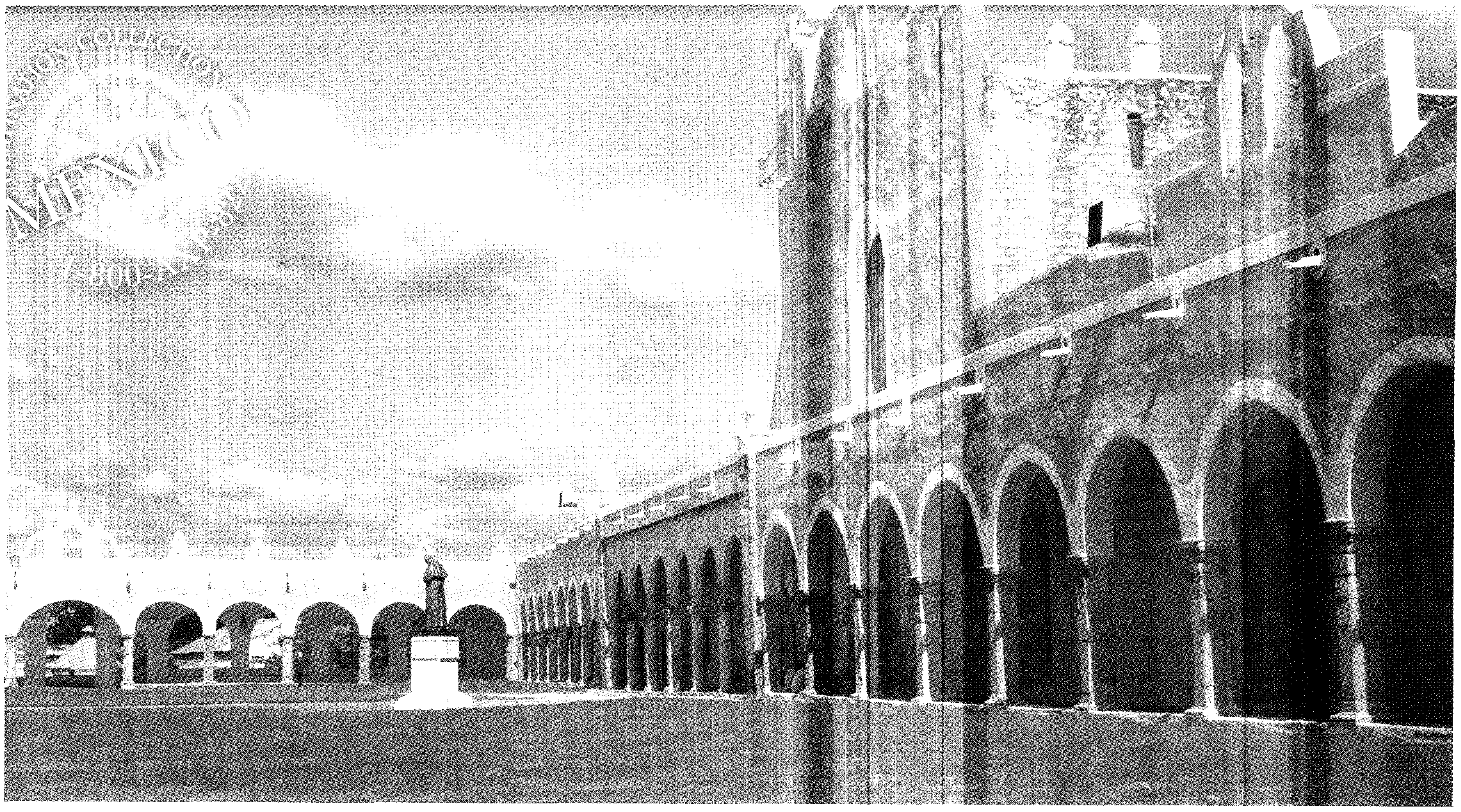

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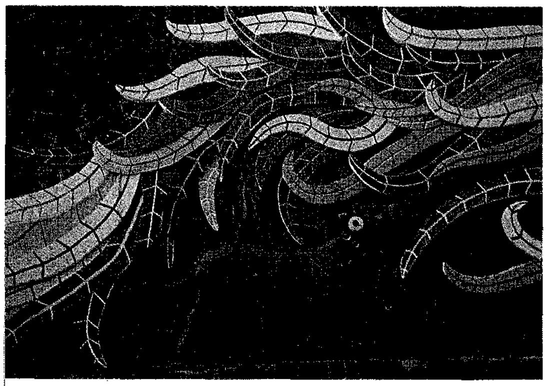

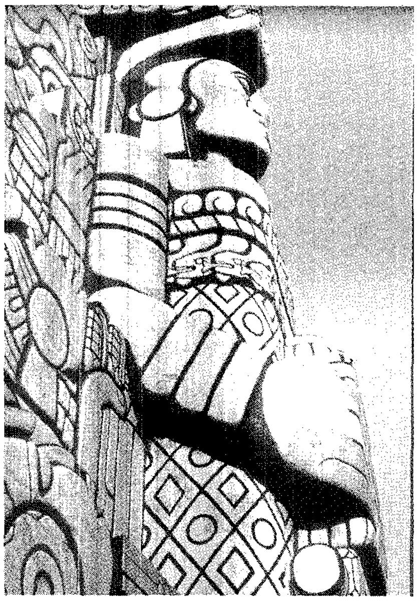

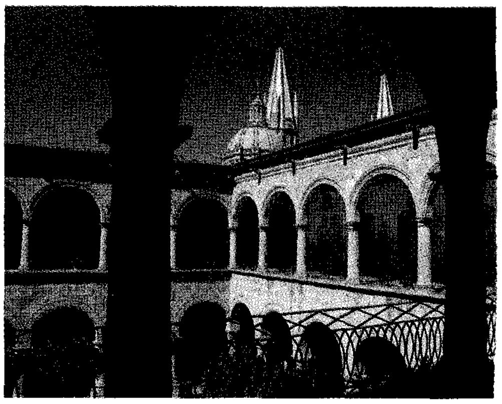

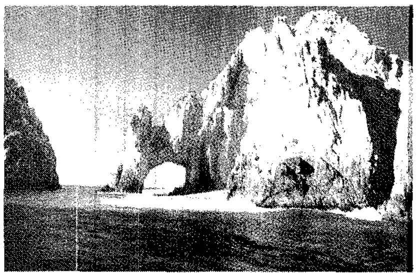

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omatic Stockhausen fans will once again be filling American halls. In some ways, the man's eccentricities impeded the advance of his music, especially in later years. Now the music is all that remains—a chaos of invention that communicates an inexhaustible, almost childlike joy in the possibilities of sound.

Perhaps the handsomest tribute so far in Stockhausen's birth/death year has come from the Berlin Philharmonic, which, at the close of the Berlin Festival, presented "Gruppen," a controlled pandemonium for three orchestral groups and three conductors. The concert took place in Hangar 2 at Tempelhof Airport, the historic site of Hitlerite fantasies and of the Berlin airlift. Tempelhof is scheduled to close at the end of October, and parts of it are being converted to other uses. Hangar 2, a forty-five-thousand-square-foot space that resembles the Park Avenue Armory, is big enough to accommodate Stockhausen's conception; the three orchestras were arrayed in a horseshoe around the audience. With Simon Rattle, the Philharmonic's music director, sharing conducting duties with Daniel Harding and Michael Boder, the orchestra played "Gruppen" twice through on two consecutive nights. Listeners were instructed to change seats between performances so that they could obtain a different acoustic perspective. Beforehand, brass, wind, and percussion players assembled to unleash Messiaen's "Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum," another room-shaking investigation of sonic properties. Altogether, these events were among the most gripping orchestral concerts I've attended in recent seasons.

The historically charged setting stirred memories of the weird horror of Stockhausen's youth. A child of a line of farmers, he was orphaned by Nazism and the Second World War: his father, a troubled Nazi, died on the Eastern Front, and his mother, mentally ill, was apparently killed in the Nazi euthanasia program. As a teen-ager, he served as a stretcher-bearer behind the collapsing front, attending to soldiers whose faces had melted away. A fan of American pop, he sometimes serenaded dying soldiers with the likes of "Tea for Two" and "Honeysuckle Rose." During the American occupation, he studied at the Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, which was supported, in part, by "reorientation" dollars. In short, Stockhausen's mind was shaped and scarred by the historical furies that now haunt the desolate corridors of Tempelhof. If, in later years, this composer appeared to have booked himself on one long flight from reality, who can blame him?

Stockhausen worked on "Gruppen" from 1955 to 1957, at the height of his involvement with a technique known as total serialism, which preoccupied many young Europeans in the fifties. Schoenberg had developed a system for extracting musical material from rows of twelve notes; the total serialists went further, ringing changes on the various other elements that characterize a note (duration, volume, and so on), so that music entered into a state of unending, frantic flux. At times, this method led to a kind of nerve-racking monotony. But Stockhausen seldom let himself become a prisoner of the system, even as he devised ever more elaborate schemes of ordering. In "Gruppen," he scrupulously avoids writing discernible themes—each instrument seems to be scurrying along its own twisting path—and yet the disparate sounds add up to textures of strongly defined character: insectoid swarms of string pizzicato, birdlike twitterings of upper-register winds, armor-plated blasts of brass.

In some passages, Stockhausen minimized the system and let his fantasy run wild. The latter part of the piece brings a brief, spectacular sequence in which brass sextets in each orchestra throw blazing chords to one another around the space, like alpenhorns resounding across valleys. In fact, Stockhausen conceived the score while staying in a village in the Swiss Alps, and modelled some of his organizational diagrams on mountain shapes. Romantic, too, is the sound of a solo violin singing out against a molten mass. (This music has more in common with Richard Strauss's "Alpine Symphony" than the ultra-modern young composer might have cared to admit.) At the same time, "Gruppen" mimics high-tech noises: showers of electronic pulses, fluctuations of bandwidth. And there's a jazz energy to the wah-wah-ing brass, the squealing clarinets, the pounding tom-toms and wood drums in the percussion. Soon after the Alpine brass sequence comes a gloriously mad freakout for the three orchestras together. It's a bit like hearing the big bands of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman play ad libitum at the end of a very long night on the town.

The almighty Berlin Philharmonic executed Stockhausen's complexities with fierce attention to detail and also with a kind of improvisatory verve. By the fourth performance, the musicians were visibly enjoying themselves. A surprising human warmth emerged from the more subdued, reflective passages of the work: the meanderings of a solitary guitar, the shivering masses of tremolo strings. An almost Mahlerian atmosphere of wistfulness descended in the last few minutes, as the instruments grasped onto the sweeter intervals in Stockhausen's master twelve-tone row. In light of this commanding performance, it's strange to hear reliable sources reporting that Rattle remains a controversial, even embattled figure in Berlin, not least with his own orchestra. Maybe a certain amount of interpersonal tension actually enlivens the music-making. In any case, if the usual Berlin pattern holds, whenever Rattle leaves his post the pundits will reëvaluate his regime as a golden age, and this concert will be cherished as one of his finest moments.

Rattle's most inspired stroke was to pair Stockhausen with Messiaen, whose centenary is being celebrated around the world this year. At first sight, the two composers seem poles apart: the German chasing new timbres, new technologies, alternative spiritual paths, the Frenchman steeped in tonal fundamentals and Catholic dogma. Yet, odd as it may seem, Stockhausen was a practicing Catholic at the time he wrote "Gruppen"; only in the sixties did he renounce organized religion. In the final bar of the score appear the words "DEO GRATIAS." In the neighborhood of "Et Exspecto"—which Rattle and his players delivered with gasp-inducing intensity, the tones of brass and gongs roaring through the hangar at almost unbearable volume—"Gruppen" revealed itself not only as a visceral adventure and a technical tour de force but also as an obliquely spiritual experience. Right at the end, the principal horn lets loose a soft, bright little interval, a rising major third. I had the impression that we had just heard the Big Bang run in reverse, and that this floating interval was the divine spark from which it all began. ♦

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THE THEATRE

GEOGRAPHY OF REGRET

Ian Rickson revives "The Seagull."

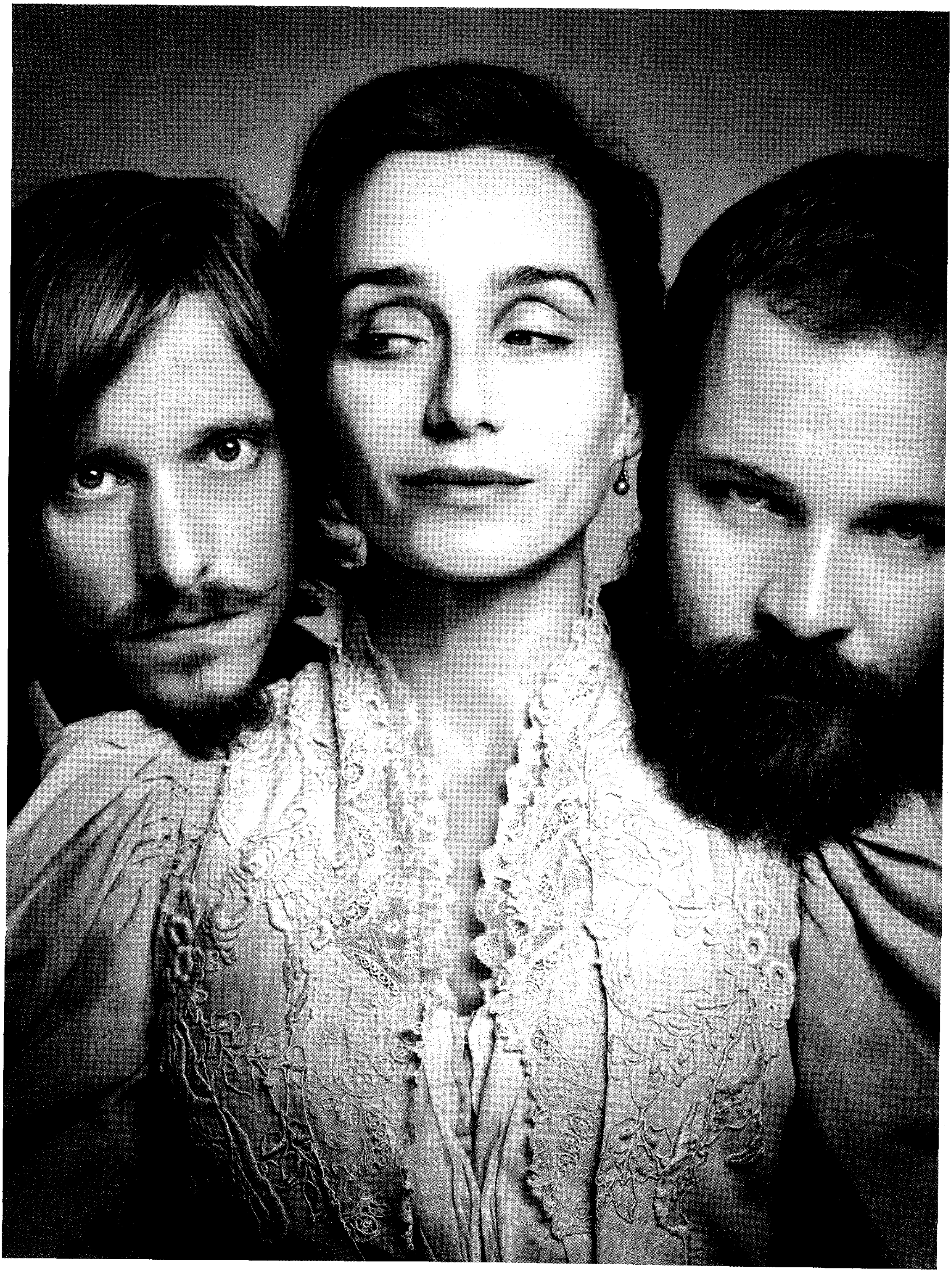
BY JOHN LAHR

When Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull" first opened in St. Petersburg, in October, 1896, the hubbub of catcalls was so loud that the actors had trouble hearing themselves. Recounting the play's sensational failure—the humiliated author stopped writing plays for a few years—Chekhov wrote to a friend, "The theatre breathed malice, the air was compressed with hatred, and in accordance with the laws of physics, I was thrown out of Petersburg like a bomb." Chekhov asked for the play to be withdrawn; the theatre refused. Two years later, at the Moscow Art Theatre, in a production directed by Constantin Stanislavsky, the play's fortune was reversed. On opening night, after the first act the curtain fell on silence—the lead actress was near tears—then, suddenly, there was a salvo of applause. From then on, Chekhov's genius and the psychological depth of his new naturalism were associated with the Moscow Art Theatre, which used a drawing of a seagull as its logo.

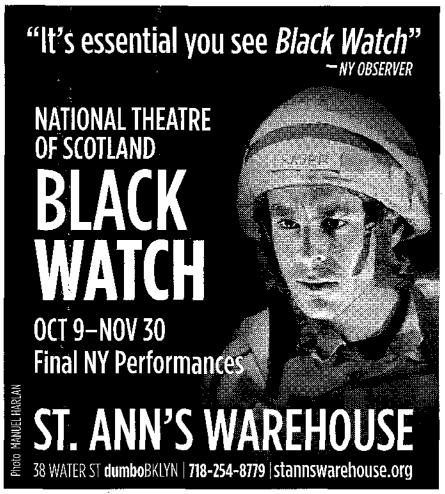
In the thrilling restaging of Ian Rickson's 2007 Royal Court production (at the Walter Kerr), Chekhov's eponymous bird is bagged on a whim by the morose twenty-five-year-old would-be playwright Konstantin Treplev (Mackenzie Crook) and laid at the feet of his young girlfriend, Nina (Carey Mulligan), a would-be actress, whose sparkling eyes are caught by the famous writer Trigorin (Peter Sarsgaard), who wanders the Treplev family estate in thrall to the sultry charms of Arkadina (Kristin Scott Thomas), Konstantin's equally famous actress mother. "I'm going to kill myself soon, the same method," Konstantin tells the bewildered Nina. The glow of his mother's celebrity has cast its corrosive shadow over him, and he longs for fame of his own as an antidote to his state of perpetual adolescent humiliation. "I'll be round at her place sometimes in a room jam full of celebrities, actors, and writers, and I'll be the only one of the lot of them who's a nobody and the only reason they put up with me is that I'm her son," Konstantin says to his uncle Sorin. "Who am I? What am I?" In Christopher Hampton's elegant and astute adaptation of the play, Konstantin is the victim of his own envy, whose murderousness he projects onto the seagull. The dead bird becomes a symbol of the unconscious aggression acted out by all the characters.

In the play's first exchange, Chekhov conjures up a climate of self-destruction. "I'm in mourning for my life," Masha (Zoe Kazan), the daughter of the estate's manager and an emotional terrorist, says. In a spectacular show of woundedness, Masha holds herself for ransom. "Please help me, help me, or I'll do something stupid, I'll ruin my life or make a mockery of it," she pleads with Dorn (Art Malik), the clear-eyed family doctor. As Masha, Kazan gives folly a fine comic face, but she doesn't sufficiently tease out the ugly recklessness of the character's malignant hysteria. Masha, who drinks and drugs herself with snuff, survives in the wilderness of provincial Russia by playing dead. Telling her story to Trigorin in the hope that he'll turn it into literature, she says, "Send me your books and make sure you write a dedication in them. Only don't say: 'Respects and best wishes,' just say: 'To Marya, who doesn't know where she belongs or what she's doing on this earth.'" Masha's perversity insures her downfall. She cures her unrequited love for Konstantin by marrying her equal in impoverishment, the impecunious teacher Medvedenko (Pearce Quigley). "Once I'm married, there'll be no time left for love," she tells Trigorin, opting instead for the living death of resignation.

On the surface of "The Seagull," love is the issue; underneath, however, cruelty, in all its vivid shades of viciousness, is what the play puts on display. And Arkadina is its centerpiece. Konstantin makes a joke of her ambivalence. "She loves me, she loves me not," he says, pulling the pet-



Mackenzie Crook, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Peter Sarsgaard in Chekhov's un-love triangle. Photograph by Max Vadukul.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als off a flower. His soi-disant "new form" of theatre is both a provocation and an appeal, a direct attack on the commercial folderol that has made Arkadina a star and a plea for the affection that she is so adept at withholding. Konstantin calls Arkadina a "psychological curiosity"; in fact, she's a cavorting casebook on narcissism. She must intrude herself everywhere, see herself reflected in everything, and control all attention. Her stinginess—she is rich but tips poorly and won't give Konstantin the money to leave their provincial estate—is indicative of an internal poverty. What neither Konstantin nor his mother understands is the dimensions of their hatred for each other. Arkadina hides her disdain from herself and the world with a show of concern. "My conscience is troubling me," she says, making a breezy entrance at a performance of her son's play and forcing its abrupt end. "What made me hurt my poor boy's feelings? It's worrying me."

As Arkadina, Scott Thomas is an inspired piece of casting. Bright-eyed, fresh-faced, and petite, she has a lithe presence that underscores Arkadina's childishness. Her seductiveness, which is immense, makes Arkadina an appealing package of potency and toxicity. Of Konstantin's attempt to conjure up Hell with the smell of sulfur, she says, "Oh, I see, it's an effect," getting a laugh. With her histrionic swagger, her moues, her shows of temperament, Scott Thomas's Arkadina is herself the most sensational of effects. Whether she is comparing herself favorably to the beleaguered Masha or luring the smitten Trigorin away from Nina, Arkadina is always watching herself go by, measuring the distance between herself and others. Scott Thomas's body language suggests this detachment; she leans back in her chair, only to spring up into the center of things. Arkadina never seems to settle; this is especially true when she is interacting with her son. She narrates love; she doesn't practice it.

Mackenzie Crook's gaunt, cadaverous look gives Konstantin a splendid ghostly quality; he moves around his mother almost unseen. "Mother, change my bandage for me. You're so good at it," he says after a suicide attempt. He adds, kissing her hand, "You have magic fingers." Those fingers can scratch as easily as soothe. Even in the final act, when Konstantin is again on the brink of killing himself, Arkadina's fluting voice can be heard, over a game of lotto, saying, "I've still never read a word he's written. I can never find the time."

Konstantin's sense of loss is compounded, in this production, by the luminous sweetness of Carey Mulligan's Nina. Rushing from her villainous father's estate to act in Konstantin's play, Nina brings with her the disarming bravery, enthusiasm, and naïveté of youth. She is instantly "the spellbinder" that Konstantin says she is; her presence is as commanding as Scott Thomas's, which makes for extraordinary chemistry onstage. Nina is open where Arkadina is strategic, full of wonder where Arkadina is self-involved. And the production makes terrific comic use of the threat that Nina poses to Arkadina's supremacy. "I'm sure you must be talented," Arkadina says, after Nina's performance, smiling with cold teeth. Nina's radiance at the beginning of the play makes her decline all the more tragic. By the time she and Konstantin meet again, on the family estate, at the finale, he has become a mediocre writer, and she, by all accounts, a mediocre actress. The death of Nina and Trigorin's child and his return to Arkadina have unmoored Nina. "I'm the seagull," she says, explaining, "A man happens to come by, sees her, and for want of anything better to do, he destroys her." As Trigorin and Arkadina are heard laughing in the next room, Nina tells Konstantin, "I love him even more than I did. . . . I love him passionately. I love him desperately." Nina fixates on Trigorin with the kind of love that she wishes would come to her; her obsession is her own mad act of self-destruction. Konstantin, for his part, realizing the inadequacy of his overwriting and the impossibility of receiving love from any quarter, chooses a quicker way to end life's intolerable indifference and also, finally, to find a plot.

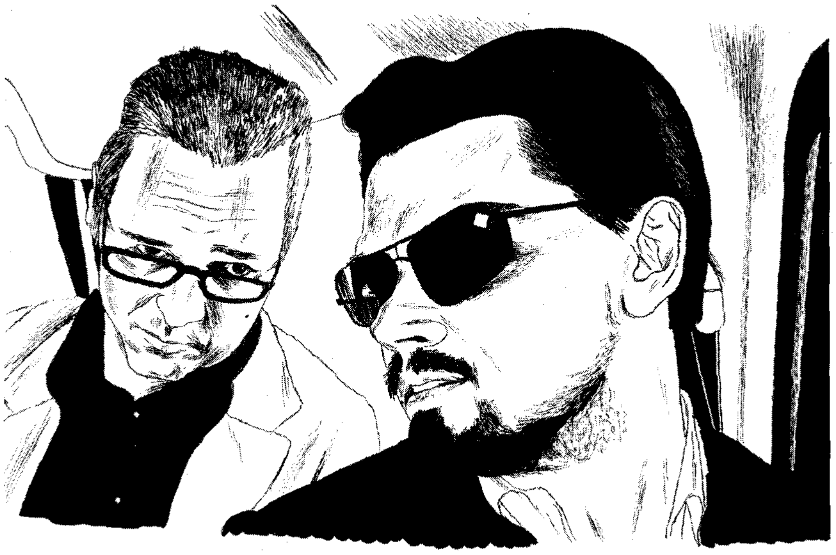
When this production was mounted in London—it was Rickson's swan song at the Royal Court, after nine years as its artistic director—the English newspapers generally agreed that it was the best "Seagull" in living memory. Even though the size of the Walter Kerr Theatre mutes the intimacy of the original production, Rickson factors out Chekhov's algebra of aimlessness with extraordinary nuance. The evening, and the ensemble's achievement, is remarkable. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

GOOD FIGHTS

“Body of Lies” and “Happy-Go-Lucky.”

BY DAVID DENBY



Russell Crowe and Leonardo DiCaprio in Ridley Scott’s new thriller.

ANDY FRIEDMAN

There’s a startling moment in “Body of Lies,” the potent new thriller directed by Ridley Scott—a moment that not only crystallizes what the movie is about but shrewdly demonstrates the ironies of asymmetrical warfare in the age of terror. The hardworking C.I.A. field agent Roger Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) has got himself involved in a complicated plan to smoke out a Middle Eastern terrorist leader who has been coördinating a series of attacks in Europe. But Ferris, based in Amman, Jordan, makes the mistake of falling in love with an Iranian-born nurse (Golshifteh Farahani). When she’s kidnapped by the terrorists, he offers himself in exchange for her freedom. Ferris’s boss, Ed Hoffman (Russell Crowe), a C.I.A. honcho who has been running Ferris by cell phone and laptop from the suburbs of Washington, arrives in the Middle East to watch the exchange, by means of a Predator drone flying over the desert. The C.I.A. wants to see where Ferris is being taken; it’s willing to use him as bait. But the terrorists don’t play along; they arrive in four S.U.V.s, drive around in a circle (kicking up a cloud of dust, which blocks the Predator’s view), snatch Ferris, and drive off in four different directions. Which S.U.V. should the Americans follow? It’s a sharp précis of the entire movie: the Americans have all the technological advantages but they don’t know the people, the signs of trust and honor; they don’t know which way the terrorists are going, and they can’t find out.

The screenwriter, William Monahan (“The Departed”), working from a novel by the Washington *Post* columnist David Ignatius, presents Ferris as a kind of ideal, and he appears, depressingly, to be the only one in the C.I.A. with the cultural sensitivity to understand the nature of the war we’re fighting. Hoffman, a sweet-voiced but ruthless Southerner, has made antiterrorism into his calling—for him, civilization is at stake—but he’s too impatient. In the end, the Americans are scrambling for bits of information, pulling computer disks out of blown-up hideouts, using people in the Middle East left and right and then discarding them. People are killed by lies. This movie is not about a war that we are winning.

Much of the atmosphere and the

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action of "Body of Lies" is familiar from such recent films as "The Kingdom," "Rendition," "Vantage Point," and "Traitor." Ridley Scott flips back and forth from Washington to the Middle East, from drone surveillance to the street, from explosions and scenes of torture to men tearing across the desert with guns blazing. But the movie is smart and tightly drawn; it has a throat-gripping urgency and some serious insights, and Scott has a greater command of space and a more explicit way with violence than most thriller directors—Ferris gets mashed like a Florida orange in a squeezer. Best of all, Scott, after all these years, has become a good director of acting. The British stage-and-TV actor Mark Strong, in superbly tailored Savile Row suits, with patrician manners to match, is great fun to watch as Hani Salaam, the brilliant Jordanian intelligence chief, a man with burning eyes who will punish anyone who tries to lie to him. (He reserves deception for his own use.) DiCaprio, bearded, speaking Arabic with a variety of accents, gives a performance that is as fine and as intense as his work in "The Departed" and "Blood Diamond." He doesn't try to look cool; he sticks to the dirty business at hand. Along with Matt Damon, he is our most reliably effective young leading man. His Ferris has a streak of decency that makes him ashamed of the way the Americans deceive and manipulate people, and he gets into profane, knockabout arguments with Crowe, whose soft, Southern tones, which try to cover cynicism with charm, only make him angrier.

The craft of the movie is superb, but, in an odd way, "Body of Lies" replicates the dilemma that it shows the C.I.A. confronting. Structurally, the movie revolves around simultaneous knowledge: again and again, Ferris is somewhere in the desert or in the street, dodging his pursuers while trying to reel in a guy who wants to quit Al Qaeda, and, as everyone begins shooting, Hoffman is in his suburban house following the action by one electronic means or another while helping to get his kids off to school. His consumption habits are a recurring joke. He's a greedy, American domestic animal—an advanced-media freak, always eating, while Ferris is getting mauled six thousand miles away. The movie shares Hoffman's mastery of space and time, but, like some of his virtuosic but pointless manipulations, it has the feeling of a spasmodic exercise in the void. In the end, terror still escapes the filmmakers' understanding.

Poppy (Sally Hawkins), the single, thirty-year-old London kindergarten teacher in Mike Leigh's comedy "Happy-Go-Lucky," bounces on a trampoline at the gym after work, but she doesn't need much of a lift—she's already airborne. Poppy has a bunny-hop walk, a chirping voice, and carnival clothes; she could be taken as a greeter at a medieval street fair. She's always happy, and when a smile takes over Sally Hawkins's face her eyes crinkle, and she looks a little like Lily Tomlin in a goofy mood. Poppy doesn't often take seriously what others take seriously; she's meant to be slightly annoying, but she's a heroine nonetheless, or, at least, a test case for a heroine. Is the possession of the happiness gene enough to get you through life without harm? Or, to put it less grandly: can a woman like Poppy serve as the protagonist of a full-length movie? Leigh has not been known for a skipping-along-the-hedgerows view of existence. His vivid, funny, and biting films have made us aware of the misery of dashed expectations ("High Hopes"), the power of surly narcissism ("Naked"), the underside of creative partnership ("Topsy-Turvy"), the depths of working-class forlornness ("All or Nothing") and inarticulate sacrifice ("Vera Drake"). But now he's put at the center of a film a young woman who teases sourpuss clerks and comforts a crazy bum, whose grunts and snarls she understands. She's a heroine because she's afraid of nothing.

Poppy likes to drink with her mates (mainly other female teachers), and she lights up when an attractive young man takes an interest in her. Leigh surrounds her with a realistic social world—workplace, family, students, a variety of grumpy and dissatisfied people. She greets them all with such frothy benevolence that you fear for her. Yet the movie, shot on sunshiny, light-filled days, feels joyous and loose-limbed, and the audience learns to relax and go with

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it. As always, Leigh improvised with his actors for weeks and settled on a script late in the rehearsal process. Some of the scenes are a little ragged, but there's so much life going on that one doesn't mind missing a line or two of dialogue, and Leigh brings an off-center humor to everything he stages. Poppy goes to a flamenco class and faces, with a group of women, a fierce teacher (Karina Fernandez), from Spain, who has erect posture and passionate control of the sculpted gesture—she embodies the very principle of order, purpose, and dignity that Poppy neglects. But the dancer's view of life is so tragic (dancing, she says, will express her grief and her desire for revenge) that she becomes a mask of woe and, amazingly, spins out of control. At that point, we understand more clearly what Leigh is doing. He will match his carefree heroine against a series of people (including a little bully boy in her class) who try to overcome their unhappiness either by behaving as aggressively as possible or by clinging to a fixed moral code.

Poppy takes driving lessons, and her sessions with a querulous instructor, Scott (Eddie Marsan), turn into a moral and philosophical tussle. Marsan is a tiny, clenched man, with a scrunched-up face, discolored teeth, and a pointed beard—he looks like one of those lost figures in the corners of Renaissance paintings, chewing out their innards on the way to Hell. Scott's fury, which seems as organic to him as cheerfulness is to Poppy, has turned him into a pedant. Driving properly is his way of doing God's work, and everything else in the world is "ignorance and fear." Poppy offends him with her sexy boots, which make it hard for her to find the clutch, and with her rubbernecking interest in squirrels and good-looking men on the street. Leigh is such an evenhanded observer that he can allow us to see that crazy Scott isn't always wrong—Poppy probably won't be a very good driver. But, as their struggle reaches a comic climax, Leigh answers the question we have been harboring: at what point does empathy reach its limits?

The movie is not an argument for chaos; it's an argument for making one's way through life with a relaxed will and an open heart. The optimism is exploratory, not programmatic; Leigh is no flower child. The only trouble with his scheme is that he has counterposed free-spiritedness and paralyzed moralism as mutually exclusive states, and there has to be something else—something like Leigh's film itself, which knows how to play easily within a firm over-all structure. "Happy-Go-Lucky" is triumphant proof that a creative middle way is always possible. ♦

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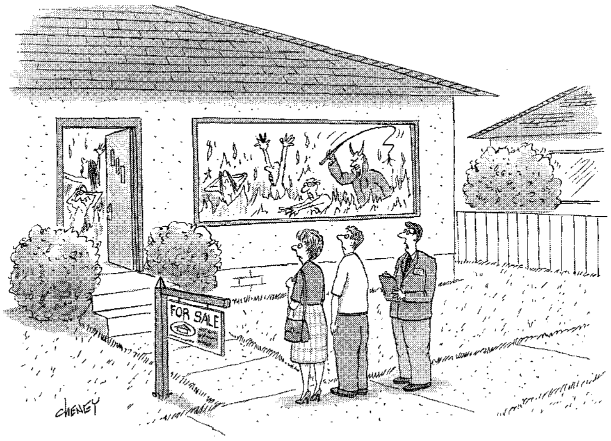
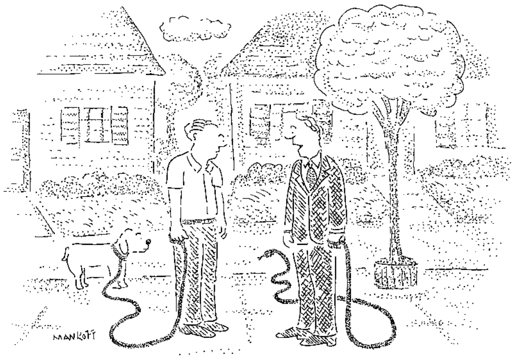
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by David Borchart, must be received by Sunday, October 12th. Finalists in the September 29th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 27th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"The seller is extremely motivated."
Mariam Erenburg, New York City



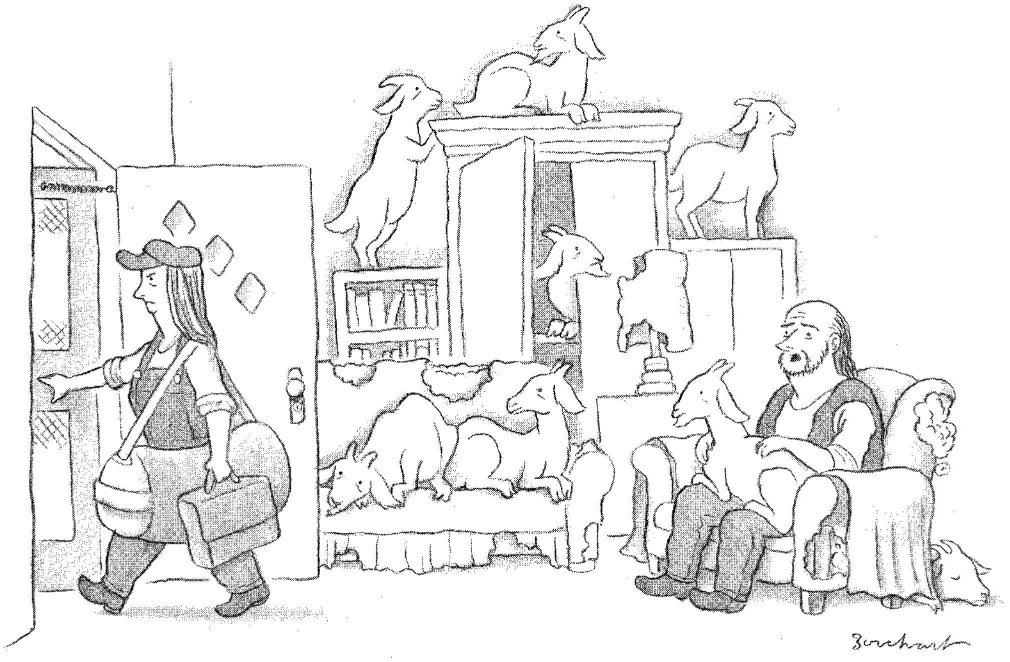
THE FINALISTS

"Relax, she prefers dachshunds."
Chas Kikel, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

"Let's just say it attracts a more interesting type of woman."
Rosi Kaufman, Prairie Village, Kans.

"Don't look now, but I believe your snake is strangling that dog."
Samantha Church, Chicago, Ill.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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THE CANDIDATES ARE PROMISING TO FIX HEALTH CARE AND FINANCIAL SECURITY.

AND WE'RE PROMISING TO MAKE SURE THEY DO.

This election year, it seems that each candidate is talking about working together and the need for change to solve our nation's health care and financial security problems.

But a funny thing often happens once the voting is over. Promises are forgotten and problems go unresolved. We can't afford to let that happen again.

That's why Divided We Fail will be watching after the elections, holding our elected leaders accountable and demanding that they work together to end the gridlock standing in the way of affordable health care and financial security for all.

Join us in ensuring that change is more than an empty promise. Visit DividedWeFail.org.

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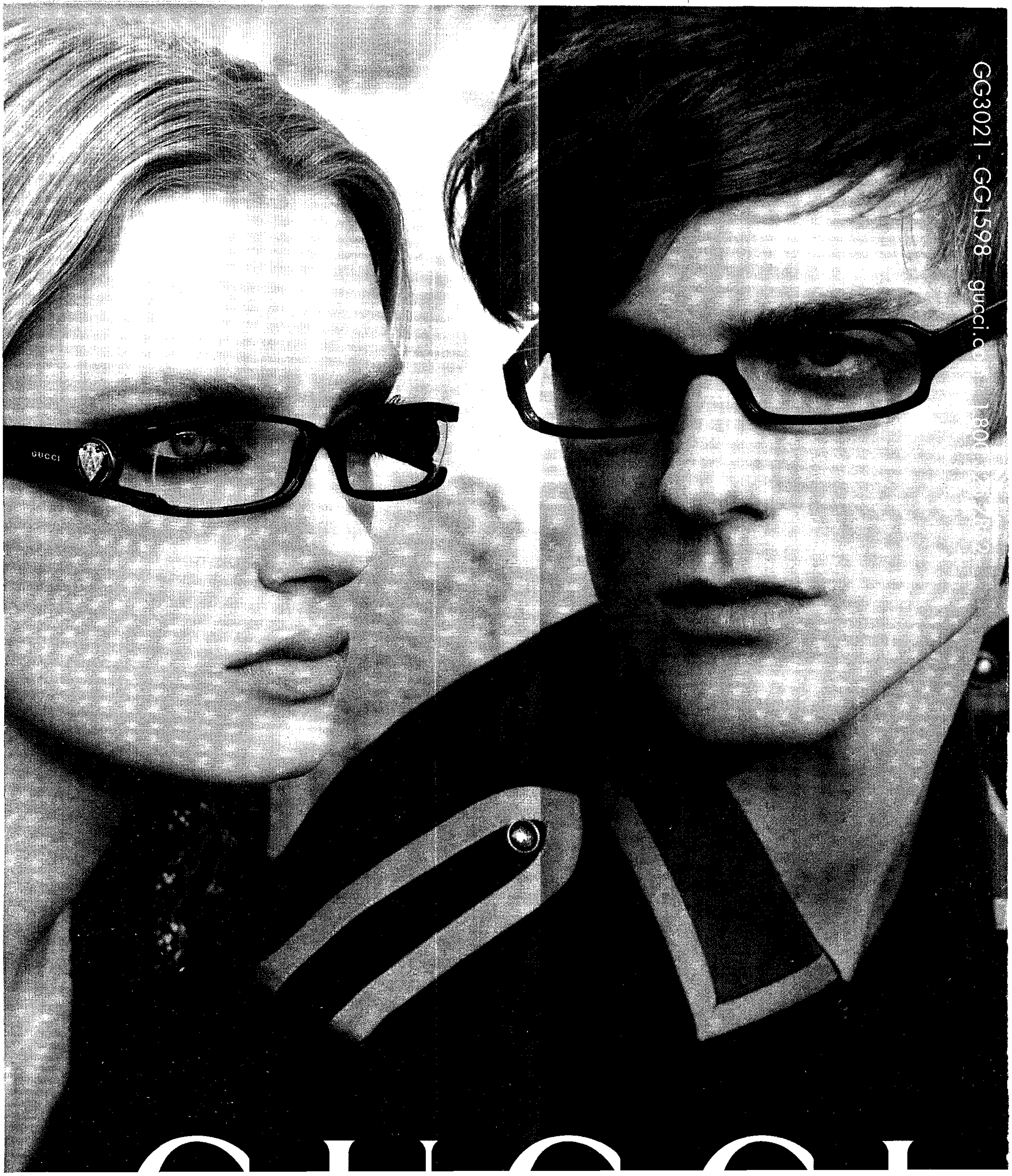
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